

The Role of Late Byzantine Thessalonike in Church Architecture in the Balkans

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The role of Thessalonike in the art and architecture of the Balkans during the late Middle Ages has long been the subject of scholarly discussion. Actually, the recognition of its significance may be said to have occurred at the very beginning of modern historiography on Byzantine art and architecture in the region of Macedonia.¹ It was Gabriel Millet who first formulated the concept of the “Macedonian School” in reference to fresco painting, an idea that paralleled his definition of Byzantine architecture in Greece as “l’école grecque.”² Such preliminary efforts to organize large bodies of hitherto unknown monuments may be perceived as having been a worthy cause in an effort to systematize the material. In reality, the labeling applied by Millet has had a lasting detrimental effect on the general course of developing historiography in the Balkans. Particularly Millet’s efforts to define various “regional schools,” in tandem with the growing nationalist political sentiments and ambitions, have left a scholarly legacy that calls for intensive reexamination in many respects. One of the enduring controversial issues, grown directly out of Millet’s classification system, is the concept of the so-called “Macedonian School” with all its ramifications. Millet’s definition of the “Macedonian School” initially applied to Byzantine fresco painting in the region of Byzantine Macedonia, but was subsequently expanded, by others, to the realm of architecture as well. The intensity of interest in the concept of a “Macedonian School” has fluctuated over time, reaching several high points since Millet

In 1993 Nikos Oikonomides invited me to give a paper at a symposium entitled “Byzantium and Serbia in the Fourteenth Century” that he organized under the auspices of the National Hellenic Research Foundation in Athens. For a variety of personal reasons I was unable to accept his invitation and did not attend that important symposium. My regrets for not being able to take part were only magnified by my feeling that I may have disappointed him, as well as other participants. In the interim, Nikos Oikonomides has passed away, along with two other colleagues, speakers at that symposium—Gordana Babić and Vojislav J. Djurić. The present article constitutes a belated expression of personal gratitude to my departed colleagues and friends.

¹ The first regional research—initially antiquarian in nature—began already in the 19th century; cf. A. J. Evans, “Antiquarian Research in Illyricum,” *Archaeologia* 49 (1855): 1–167 and P. N. Miliukov, “Christianskiia drevnosti zapadnoi Makedonii,” *IRAIK* 4 (1899): 21–149. To these may also be added I. Ivanov, *Bŭlgarski starini iz Makedoniia* (Sofia, 1908). The key works in our context, however, are the following books published just before or during World War I: N. P. Kondakov, *Makedoniia: Arkheologicheskoe puteshestvie* (St. Petersburg, 1909); O. Tafrali, *Topographie de Thessalonique* (Paris, 1913); G. Millet, *L’école grecque dans l’architecture byzantine* (Paris, 1916); C. Diehl, M. Le Tourneau, and H. Saladin, *Les monuments chrétiens de Salonique* (Paris, 1918).

² G. Millet, *Recherches sur l’iconographie de l’Évangile* (Paris, 1916), 625–90, where the “Macedonian school” is seen as open to influence from the “Orient and Italy,” in contrast to the more conservative “Cretan school.”

first formulated it.³ Reasons and motives behind these “high points” constitute in their own right a subject worthy of investigation. As my aim here is to address the role of Thessalonike in architecture in the Balkans during the late Middle Ages, I will limit my remarks to only certain specific historiographical issues. These will help illuminate some of our established conceptions and misconceptions about the role of the second city of the Byzantine Empire in the shaping of architecture in the Balkans during the fourteenth century.

The question of “Macedonian” and, more specifically, “Thessalonian” architecture during the late Byzantine period has been broached by a number of scholars in recent years. Their approaches and methodologies have differed vastly, as have the results of their findings. None of them, it may be added, approached the problem comprehensively. Consequently, our understanding of the architecture in Thessalonike is still rather incomplete. Surprisingly, not a single surviving monument of late Byzantine Thessalonike has a comprehensive scholarly monograph. Less surprisingly perhaps, in these circumstances, the architecture of this important chapter in the city’s history has never been a subject of a study in its own right. Among those who have dealt with this material, but have approached it from very specific, limited angles, one should note A. Goulaki-Voutira, P. Vokotopoulos, and M. Rautman.⁴ Goulaki-Voutira has examined the issue of identification and dating of Palaiologan churches of Thessalonike, Vokotopoulos has discussed the architectural typology of the period, while Rautman has addressed the question of patronage of church architecture in the city and within the region of Macedonia as a whole. To these one may also add an article by G. Velenis, whose own revisiting the subject of regionalism in the architecture of Macedonia will serve as my point of departure.⁵

After discussing various aspects of the church of the Holy Apostles in Thessalonike with the aim of demonstrating its idiosyncratic regional character and, therefore, its inde-

³ A. Xyngopoulos, *Thessalonique et la peinture macédonienne* (Athens, 1955); V. N. Lazarev, “Zhivopis XI–XII vekov v Makedonii,” *XIIe Congrès international des études byzantines. Rapports V* (Belgrade, 1961); A. Procopiou, *The Macedonian Question in Byzantine Painting* (Athens, 1962); P. Miljković-Peppek, *Deloto na zografite Mihailo i Eutihij* (Skopje, 1967); P. Miljković-Peppek, “L’architecture chrétienne chez les Slaves macédoniens à partir d’avant la moitié du IXe jusqu’à la fin du XIIe siècle,” *The 17th International Byzantine Congress, Major Papers* (Washington, D.C. 1986), 483–500; G. Velenis, “Building Techniques and External Decoration during the 14th Century in Macedonia,” in *L’art de Thessalonique et des pays balkaniques et les courants spirituels au XIVe siècle*, ed. R. Samardžić (Belgrade, 1987), 95–105; C. Giros, “Remarques sur l’architecture monastique en Macédoine orientale,” *BCH* 116 (1992): 409–443. I. M. Chatzifotis, *Μακεδονική Σχολή. Η σχολή του Πανσελίνου (1290–1320)* (Athens, 1995) and most recently G. M. Velenis, “Macedonian School in Architecture of the Middle and Late Byzantine Period” in K. Fledelius, ed., *Byzantium: Identity, Image and Influence. XIX International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, vol. 1 (Copenhagen, 1996), 500–505, as well as an expanded version in Greek, idem. “Ἡ ἀρχιτεκτονική Σχολή τῆς Μακεδονίας κατὰ τὴν μέση καὶ ὕστερη βυζαντινὴ περίοδο,” *Σύναξη* 63 (1997): 49–60. A. Bryer, “The Rise and Fall of the Macedonian School of Byzantine Art (1910–1962),” in *Ourselves and Others*, ed. P. Mackridge (Oxford, 1997), 79–87, displaying premature optimism, declares that by 1962 the concept of the “Macedonian School” had run its course. Unfortunately, Bryer appears not to have been sensitive enough in his reading of some of the scholarly literature published in the 1980s and 1990s. If the larger issue may be construed as debatable, his prognosis has been seriously challenged by the work of Chatzifotis.

⁴ A. Goulaki-Voutira, “Zur Identifizierung von paläologenzeitlichen Kirchen in Saloniki,” *JÖB* 34 (1984): 255–64, with certain interpretations of original names and dates that have not met with universal approval; P. Vokotopoulos, “Οἱ μεσαιωνικοὶ ναοὶ τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης καὶ ἡ θέσις τοὺς ὁρᾶται πλάισια τῆς βυζαντινῆς ναοδομίας,” in *Ἡ Θεσσαλονίκη μεταξύ Ανατολῆς καὶ Αὐσέως* (Thessalonike, 1982), 97–110 was a useful initial overview of the role of Thessalonike in the development of later Byzantine architecture; it was followed by a much more narrowly focused article, idem, “Church Architecture in Thessaloniki in the 14th Century. Remarks on the Typology,” in *L’art de Thessalonique et des pays balkaniques et les courants spirituels au XIVe siècle*, ed. Samardžić, 107–16; M. Rautman, “Patrons and Buildings in Late Byzantine Thessaloniki,” *JÖB* 39 (1989): 295–315.

⁵ Velenis, “Building Techniques,” 95–105.

pendence from Constantinople, Velenis focused on what he defined as its “Macedonian dome” (Fig. 1). According to him, the “Macedonian dome” is elevated on a tall drum, its exterior articulated by a slender arcade, each arch of which contains a single-light window with a flat wall area, often containing decorative brickwork, directly above the window opening. He cites twenty-two examples of such domes, without considering their chronological range, and downplaying the fact that their geographic spread reveals some significant deviations from the “regional” pattern that he had set out to demonstrate. The oldest example cited in his corpus of “Macedonian domes” paradoxically appears on the church of the Panagia Paregoritissa at Arta, dated 1282–89, a building obviously totally removed from the Macedonian scene (Fig. 2). According to Velenis, the external design of the domes in question is the function of an effort to increase their *interior* surfaces for optimum display of mosaics and frescoes.⁶ The phenomenon of heightening the drum, however, cannot be tied to such reasoning. Instead, it may have been informed by structural and, even more probably, by aesthetic reasons.⁷ The choice was most likely governed by a desire for more attenuated proportions of dome drums, a tendency demonstrable in most later Byzantine buildings. Interesting insights into this issue come from the church of the Mother of God (Bogorodica) at the monastery of Studenica in central Serbia. Begun in 1183 (?), the church was completed with a dome on a low drum perforated with twelve windows, one within each of its twelve arched facets. Probably in the second decade of the fourteenth century, as recently proposed, the drum was heightened and its arcade attenuated by the insertion of small blank tympana above each window opening and below the newly created arcade (Fig. 3).⁸ During a recent restoration of the church, the later additions were removed and the original low form of the drum restored along with its presumed original external coat of painted plaster (Fig. 4). The late medieval changes at Studenica could only have been effected by external, most likely aesthetic concerns. These, in turn, must have been part of a more universal trend in Byzantine architecture, unrelated to the “Macedonian dome” issue.

The ineptness of the “Macedonian dome” definition, in fact, can be demonstrated on the very building that Velenis chose to vindicate as the product of a local, that is, “Macedonian building school”—the church of the Holy Apostles. An examination of its four minor domes reveals that, unlike its main dome, they did not feature a blank field above each of their original window openings (Fig. 5). The present in-fills above rectilinear window frames are the result of the much later Ottoman interventions. Thus the church of the Holy Apostles, according to the Velenis hypothesis, would have to be seen as a hybrid so-

⁶ This explanation is not borne out by the physical evidence in such buildings, however. Most of the hemispherical dome surfaces in the buildings in question—in fact in most middle and late Byzantine domed churches—begin directly above the window arches. Only on very rare occasions do windows intrude into the hemisphere of the dome itself. Consequently, the feature in question must be seen for what it effectively is—a by-product of concern for the exterior articulation of dome drums.

⁷ O. Marković-Kandić, “Odnos kalote i tambura na kupolama u Vizantiji i srednjovekovnoj Srbiji” (“Rapport de la calotte et du tambour des coupôles à Byzance et dans la Serbie médiévale”), *Zograf* 6 (1975): 8–10, who argues for the structural rationale in the design of dome drums. Domes on most of the churches in question, however, are small enough that such solutions should have been totally unnecessary. Of course, our theoretical understanding of such issues was not available to the medieval builder, and thus the notion of “perceived” structural role of certain design choices should not be dismissed out of hand.

⁸ M. Čanak-Medić, “Vreme prvih promena oblika studeničke Bogorodičine crkve” (“L’époque des premiers changements apportés à l’aspect de l’église de la Vierge de Studenica”), *Studenica i vizantijska umetnost oko 1200. godine*, ed. V. Korać (Belgrade, 1988), 517–24.

lution in which a “Macedonian dome” appeared alongside the four “non-Macedonian” domes (Fig. 6). This phenomenon, ignored by Velenis, must have a different explanation.

While it now may be clear that the invention of the term “Macedonian dome” was inappropriate, my exercise of demonstrating this point actually has other objectives. The first of these is to demonstrate that the architecture of Thessalonike came into being as a result of different builders from elsewhere accepting employment in the newly prospering city, toward the end of the thirteenth century. The second and more important objective is to show that by around 1300 certain uniform building standards *did* evolve in Thessalonike and that these, under specific conditions, were eventually transplanted into neighboring areas of the Balkans, especially into Serbia.⁹

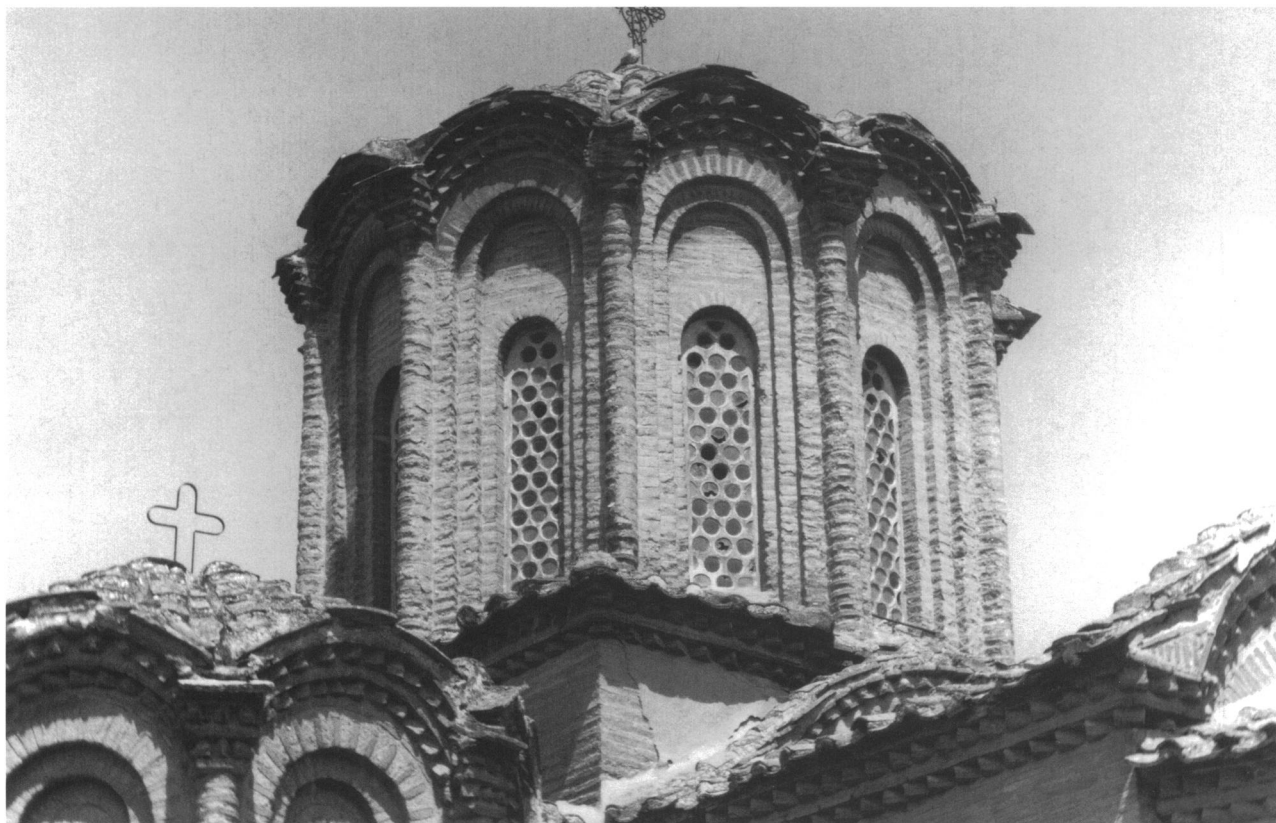
The first of the stated objectives may be demonstrated by turning to the church of H. Aikaterine (Fig. 7). This major monument of Palaiologan architecture was extensively restored in the late 1940s, but the results of findings made at the time have never been published. Recent conservation work on the building has brought to light much new information whose final publication is pending.¹⁰ Lacking any historical information, the building’s date and even its original name remain unknown. Proposed dates have ranged from as early as ca. 1280 to as late as the second quarter of the fourteenth century.¹¹ Putting aside the dating controversy at this point, I will merely point out certain incompatible features of this building that signal unmistakably the input of builders from two distinctly different Byzantine building traditions. The four small domes of H. Aikaterine, for example, are all octagonal, but differ among themselves in terms of their overall proportions as well as in terms of their construction details. The eastern domes have a slightly smaller diameter and are proportionally taller than the western pair. Furthermore, the eastern domes reveal the use of stone bands alternating with brick in the construction of their drums, a technique not otherwise encountered among Thessalonian churches (Fig. 8). By contrast, the two western domes reveal all-brick construction. Their relatively large diameters, on the other hand, have resulted in their corner colonnettes being framed by vertically set bricks that create a very distinctive, independent relationship between each colonnette and the neighboring arcades. This is particularly apparent on the northwest dome drum, its colonnettes appearing as though they were placed into special recesses, setting them completely apart from the surrounding masonry (Fig. 9). The same, even more pronounced detail occurs on the main dome, where it alternates with curious round niches as framing devices of individual windows (Fig. 10).

The seemingly negligible detail of thus accentuated corner colonnettes was the hallmark of dome construction in churches associated with the Despotate of Epiros. This may

⁹ For a general overview of 14th-century churches in Thessalonike, see Vokotopoulos, “Church Architecture.”

¹⁰ Evangelia Hadjityrphonos, then an architect-restorer in the Ninth Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities in Thessalonike, was in charge of the restoration of the church from 1988 to 1994. She is currently preparing a final report on the work carried out on the building under her supervision. For a preliminary report see E. Hadjityrphonos, “Εργασίες συντήρησης και αποκατάστασης στην Αγ. Αικατερίνη Θεσσαλονίκης 1988–1993,” *Μνημείο και περίβαλλον* 3: 1 (1995), 79–88. I am grateful to Dr. Hadjityrphonos for providing me with an opportunity to examine the building from the scaffolding while the restoration was in progress. I have also benefited from the many discussions we have had over the years regarding this and other related buildings.

¹¹ P. I. Kuniholm and C. L. Striker, “Dendrochronological Investigations in the Aegean and Neighboring Regions, 1977–1982,” *JFA* 10.4 (1983): 419, provide a date of 1280 for H. Aikaterini. This date was revised by the authors to 1315 in *JFA* 14.4 (1987): 395. G. M. Velenis, *Ερμηνεία του εξωτερικού διακόσμου στη βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική* (Thessalonike, 1984), vol. 1: 227, dates the church to ca. 1320.



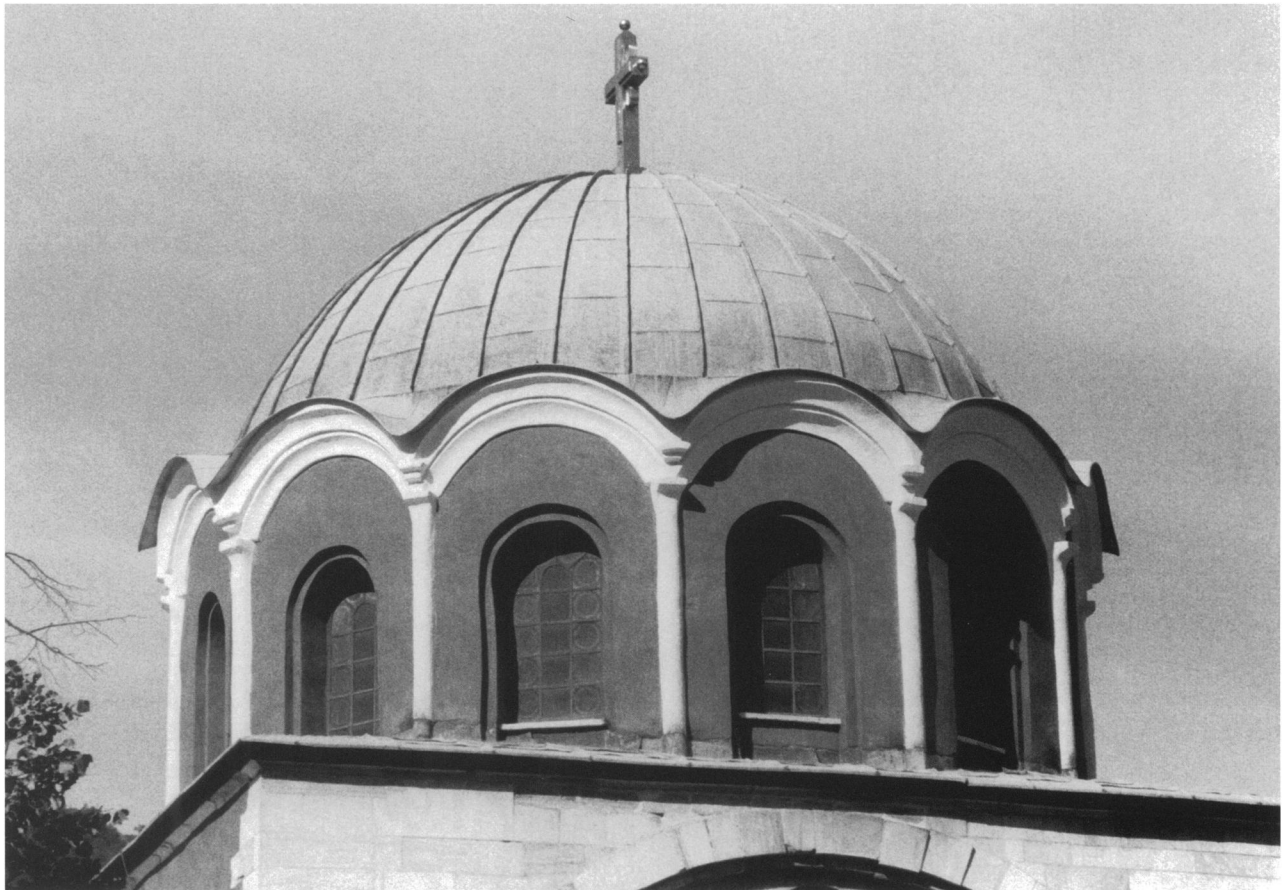
1 Thessalonike, Holy Apostles, main dome from the southeast



2 Arta, Panagia Paregoritissa, main dome from the southeast



3 Studenica monastery, church of the Mother of God, dome, from the south, after removal of 19th-century plaster



4 Studenica monastery, church of the Mother of God, dome, from the south, after recent restoration



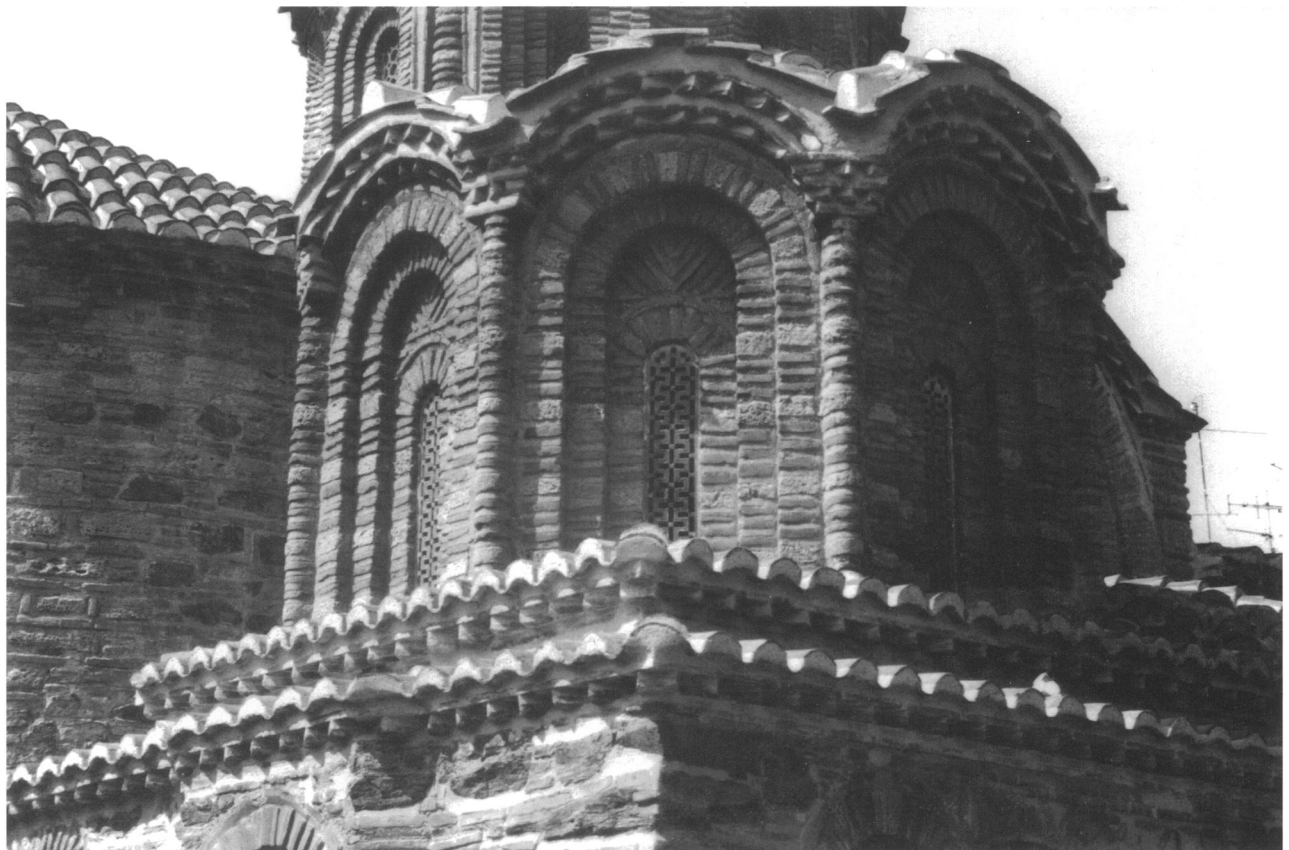
5 Thessalonike, Holy Apostles, southeast minor dome, from the east



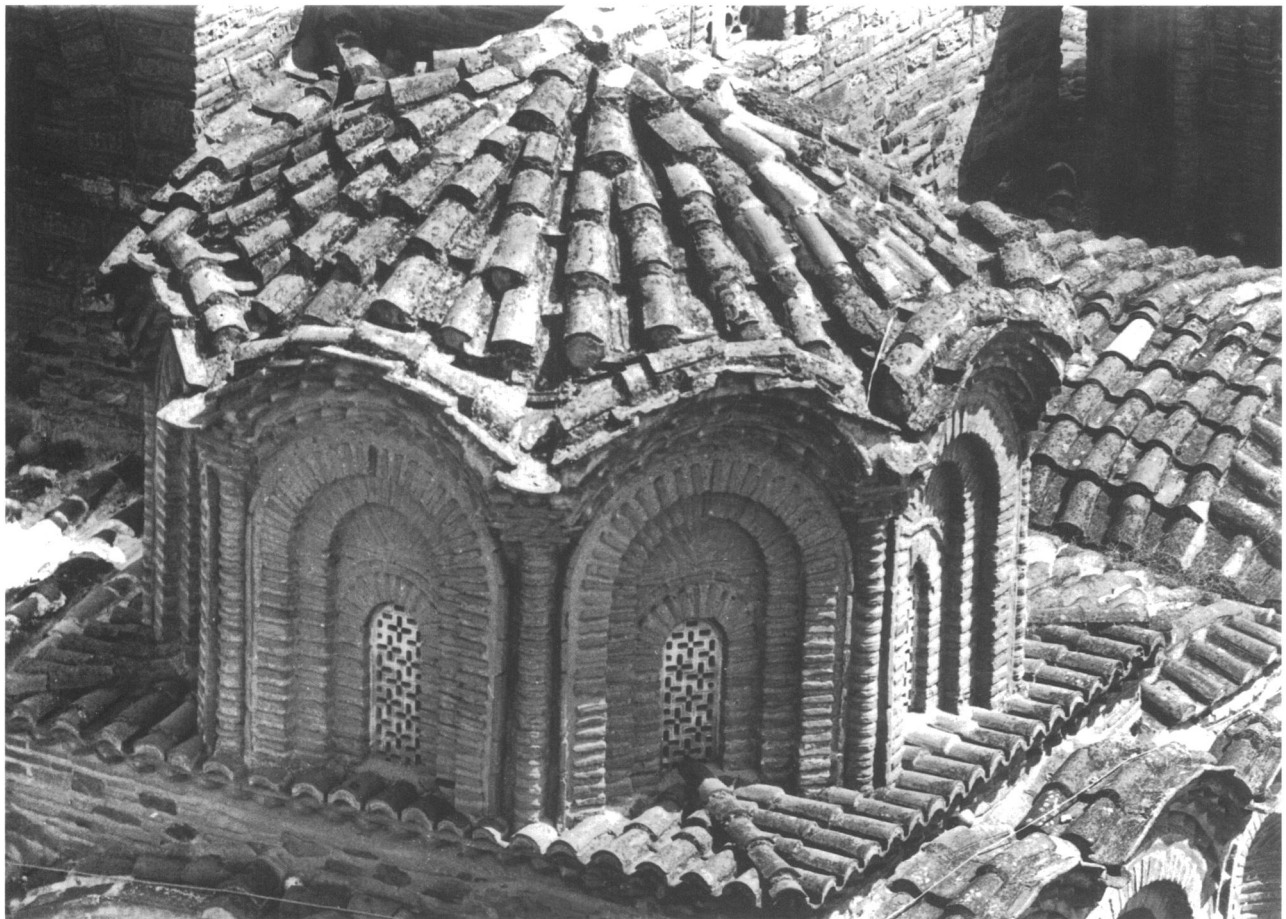
6 Thessalonike, Holy Apostles, general view from the northeast



7 Thessalonike, H. Aikaterine, general view from northwest (photo: L. Bouras)



8 Thessalonike, H. Aikaterine, northeast minor dome, from the northeast



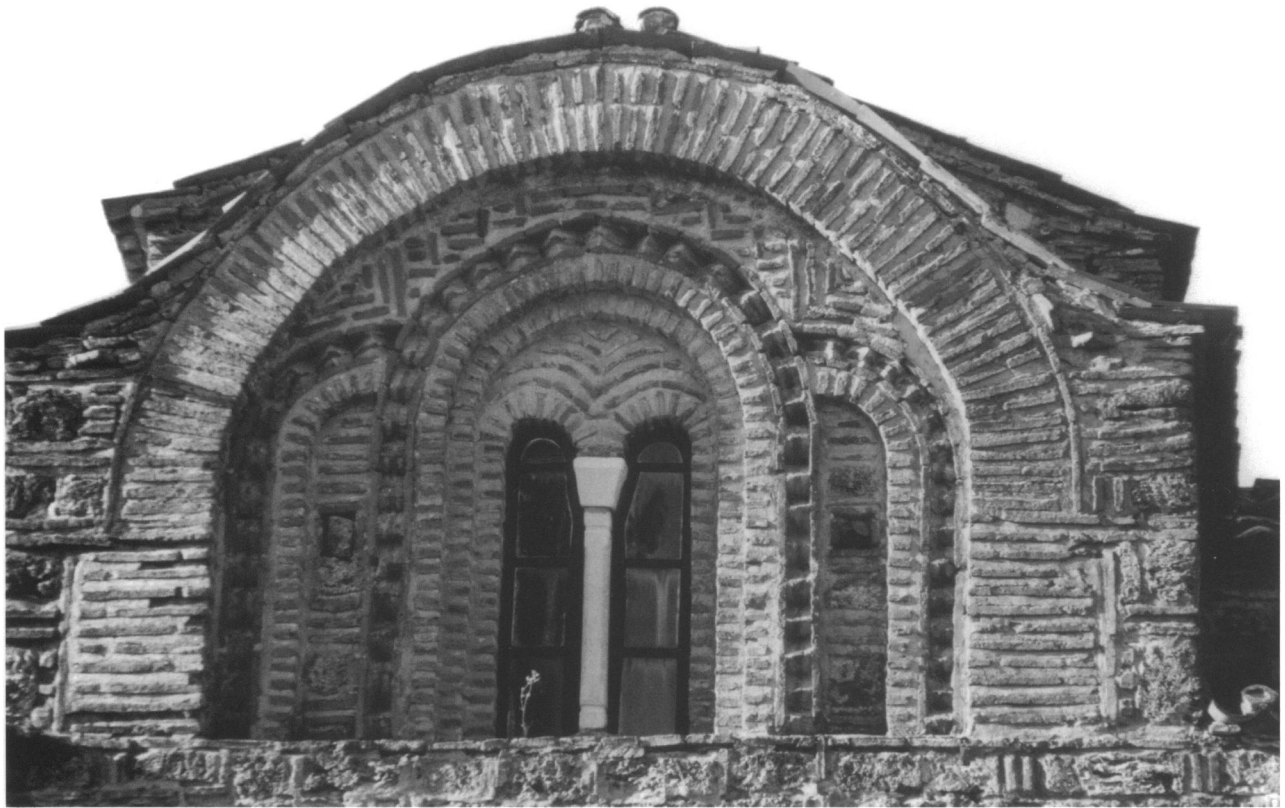
9 Thessalonike, H. Aikaterine, northwest minor dome, from the northwest (photo: L. Bouras)



10 Thessalonike, H. Aikaterine, main dome, from the northwest (photo: L. Bouras)



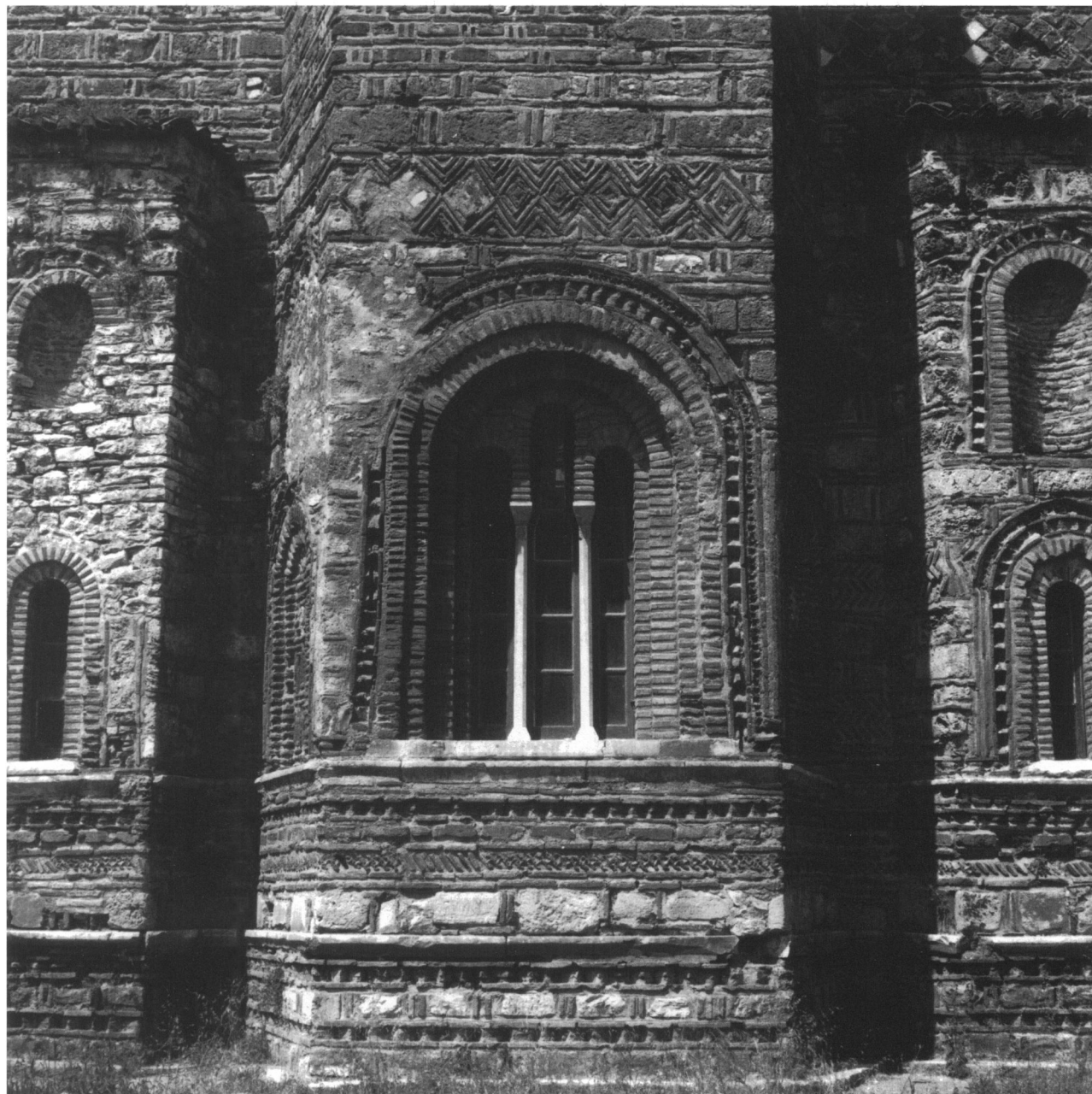
11 Thessalonike, H. Aikaterine, upper part of *naos*, detail of north façade (photo: L. Bouras)



12 Voulgarelli, Panagia Vellas, south façade; detail (photo: J. Trkulja)



13 Thessalonike, H. Aikaterine, exonarthex, west façade, north side



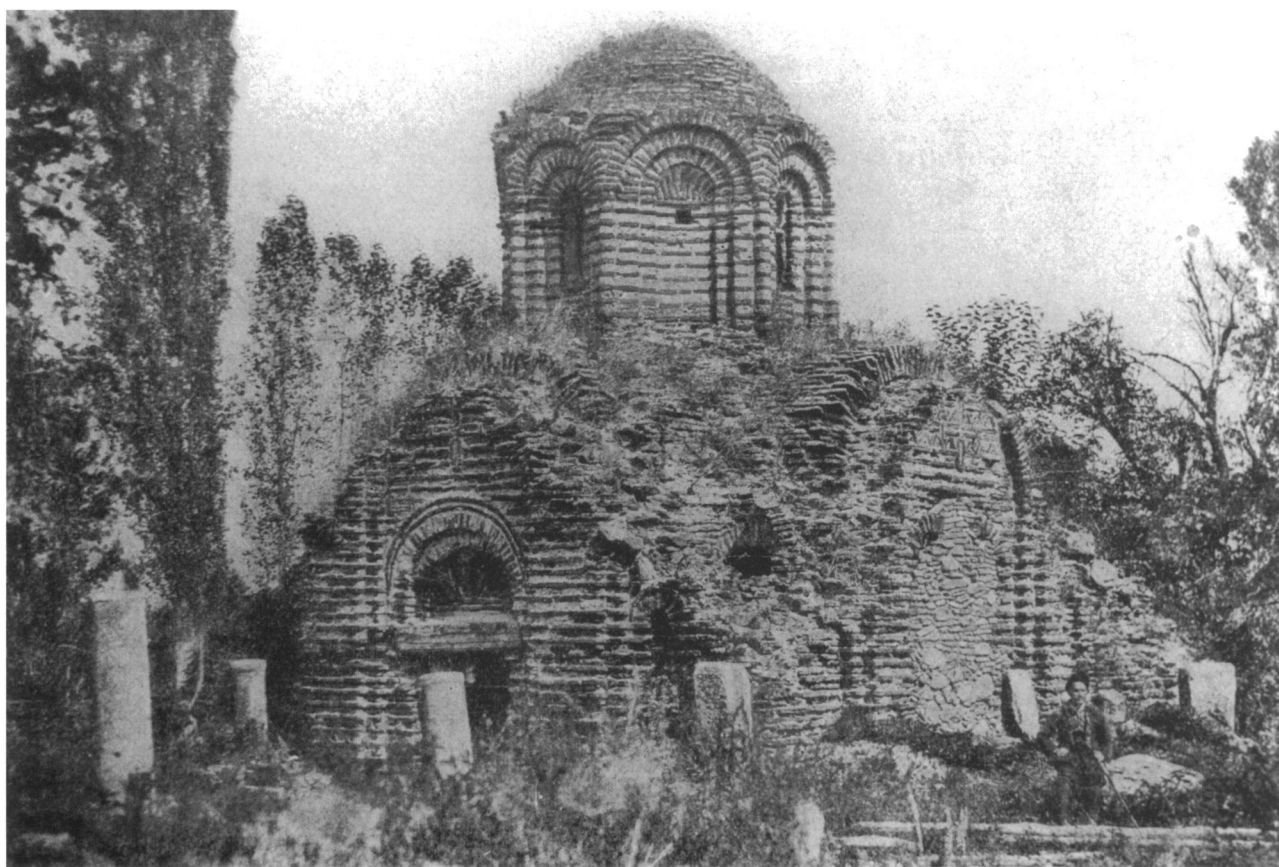
14 Arta, Panagia Paregoritissa, east façade; detail



15 Mount Athos, Hilandar monastery, *Katholikon*; narthex domes from the southwest



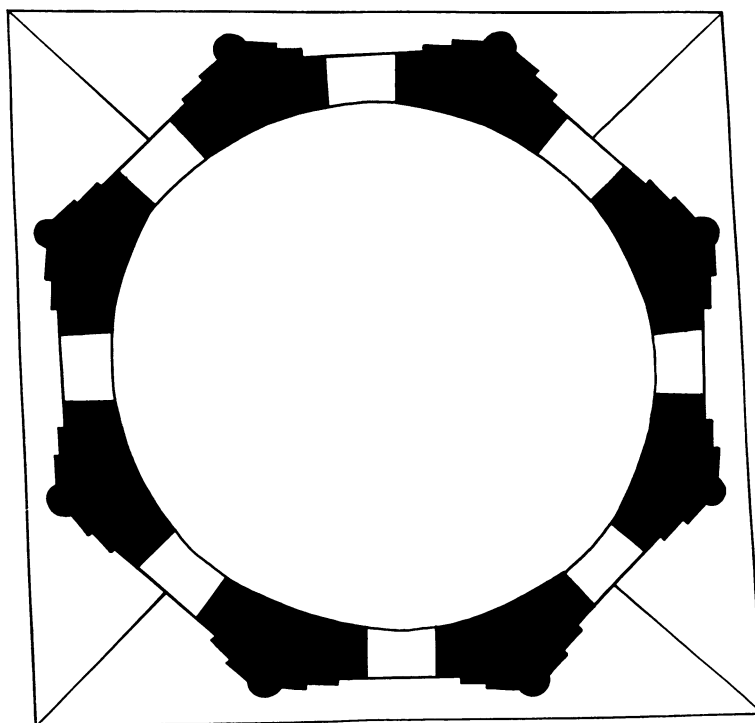
16 Istanbul, Panagia Pammakaristos (present Fethiye Camii), main church dome, from the southwest (photo: Dumbarton Oaks Photograph Collection)



17 Koluša, St. George, general view from the southwest, state as in 1898 (photo: N. Mavrodinov)



18 Thessalonike, H. Panteleimon, main dome, from the northeast



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19 Thessalonike, H. Panteleimon, main dome, plan (drawing by M. Mihaljević)



20 Thessalonike, H. Panteleimon, general view from the southeast, ca. 1900 (after *Thessalonike and Its Monuments*, 96)



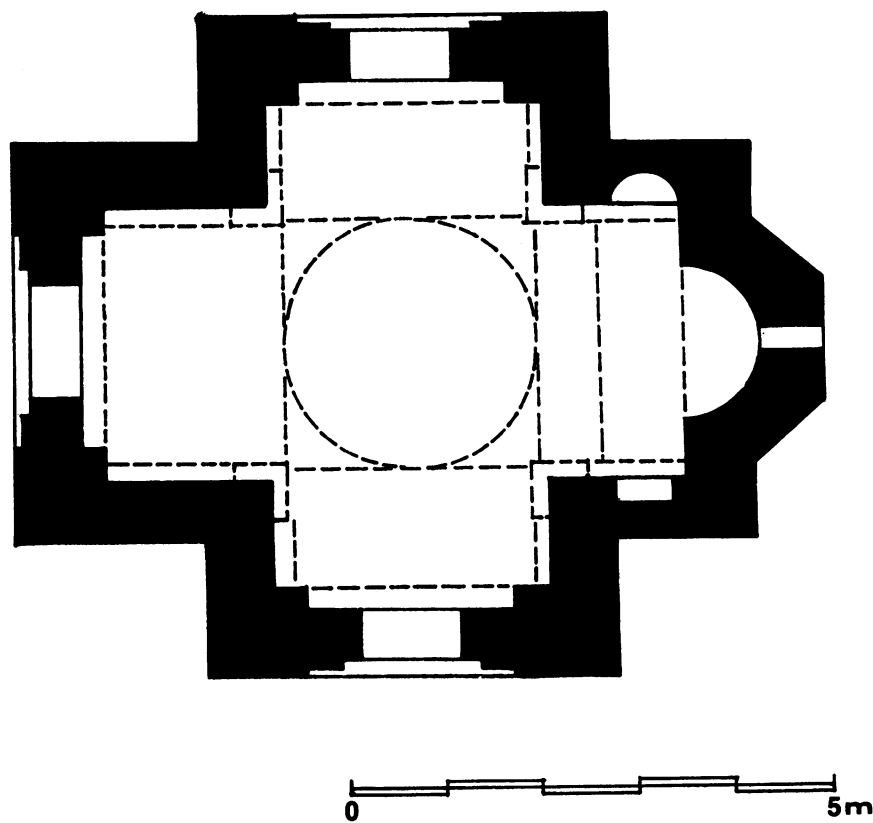
21 Thessalonike, Metamorphosis (Christos Sotir), from the north



22 Thessalonike, Mone Vlatadon, *katholikon*, dome from the east



23 Thessalonike, Profitis Elias, general view from the southeast (photo: Ch. Bouras)



24 Rendina, church, plan; partially reconstructed (author; after N. Moutsopoulos)



25 Rendina, church, dome interior; present state, looking east



26 Rendina, church, view of ruins from the north (from *Eastern Macedonia —1994*)



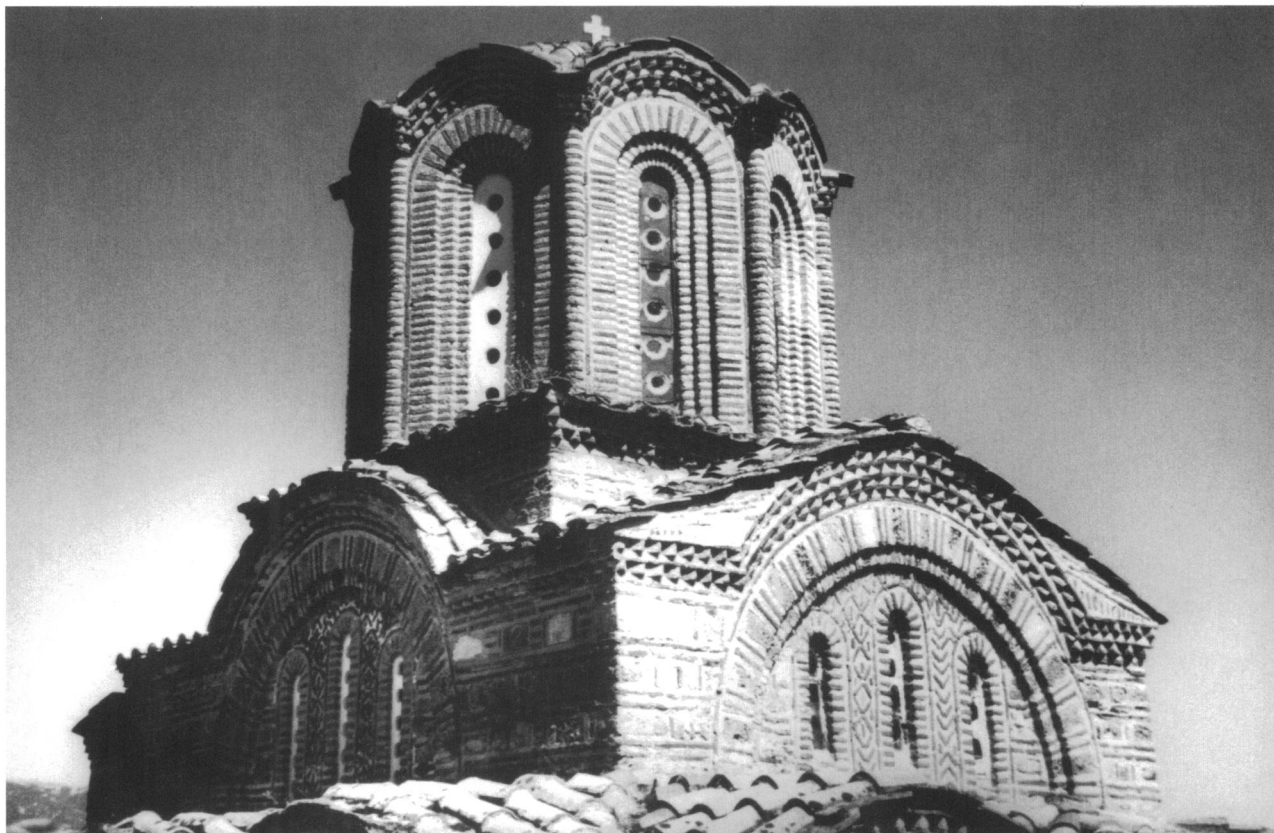
27 Rendina, church, dome, detail of drum, from the northwest



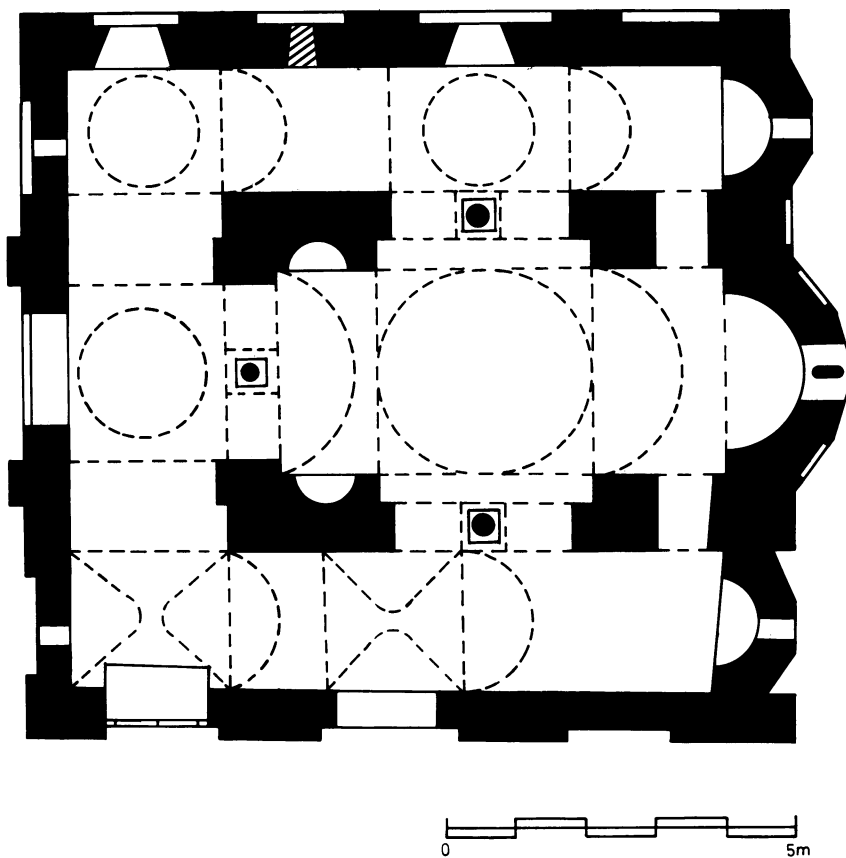
28 Serres, Prodomos monastery, *katholikon*, chapel of St. Nicholas, dome, from the north



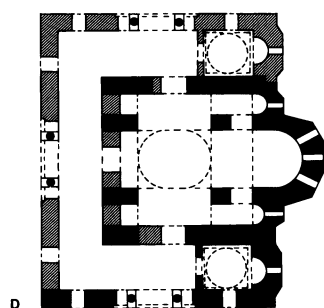
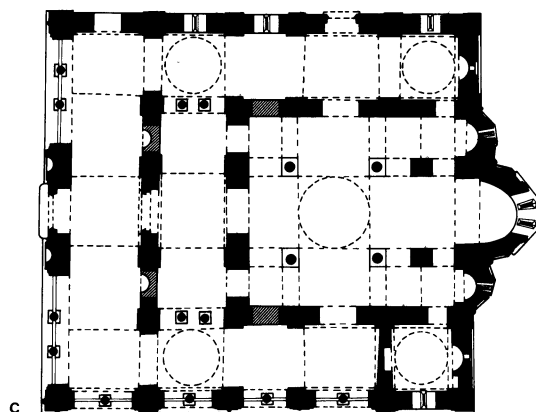
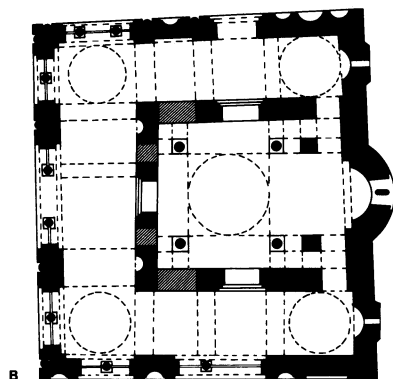
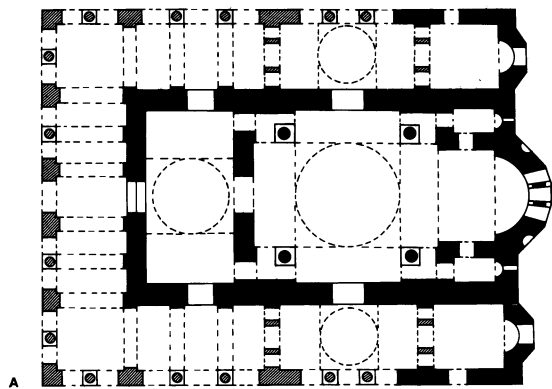
29 Hosios Loukas, monastery, church of the Panagia, dome, from the northwest



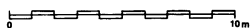
30 Ellasson, Panagia Olympiotissa, dome from the northwest (photo: J. Trkulja)

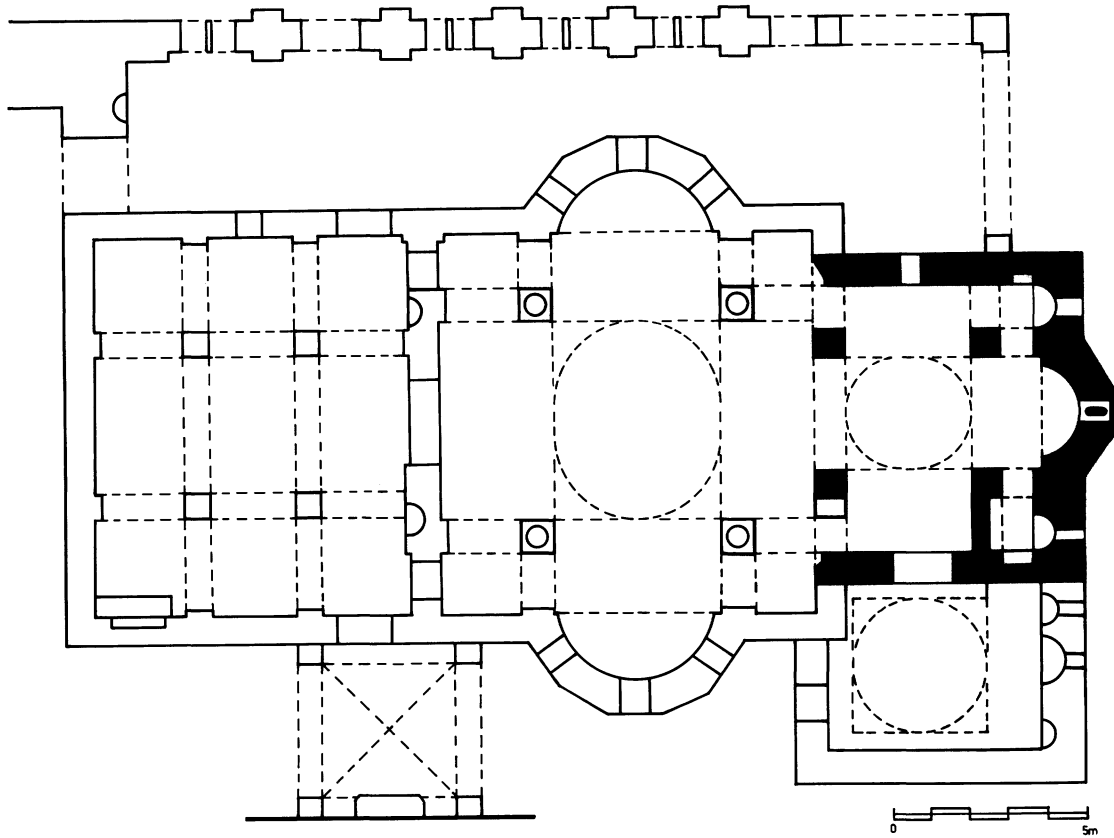


31 Ellasson, Panagia Olympiotissa, plan (drawing by J. Bogdanović)

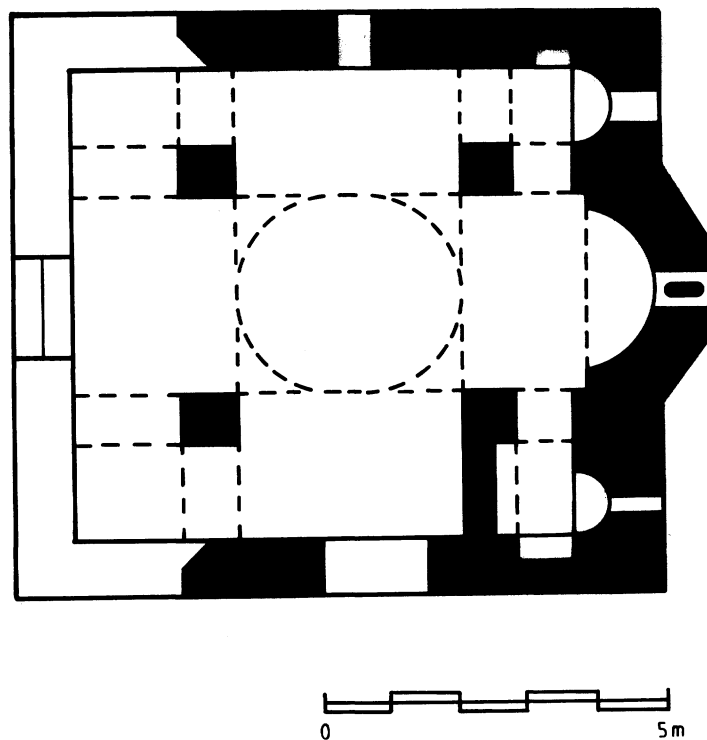


32 Plans of Thessalonian churches: (A) H. Panteleimon;
(B) H. Aikaterine; (C) Holy Apostles; (D) Vlatadon
(drawing by J. Bogdanović)





33a Meteora, Great Meteoron monastery, church of the Metamorphosis, plan (drawing by J. Bogdanović)



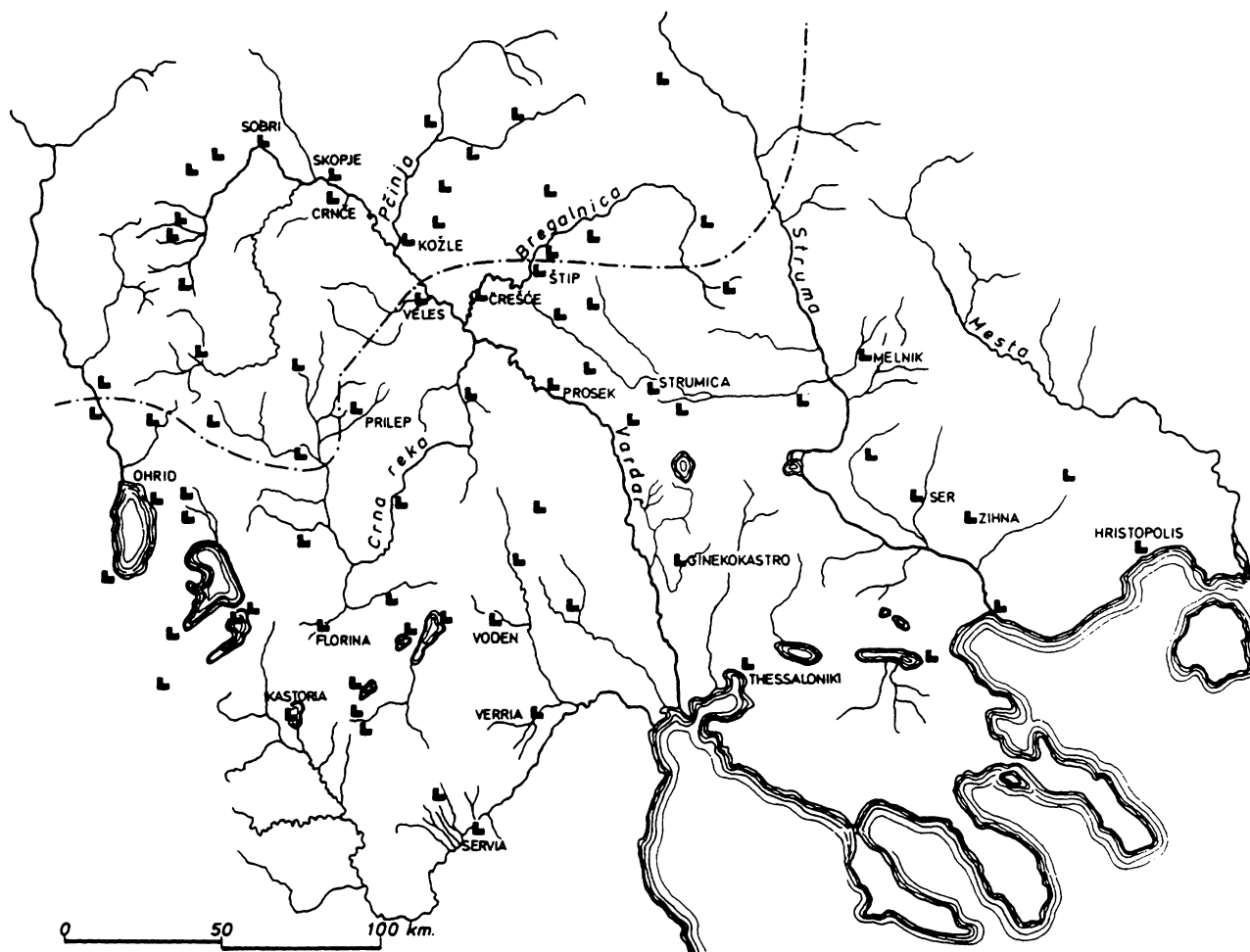
33b Meteora, Great Meteoron monastery, church of the Metamorphosis, original building, plan (hypothetical reconstruction, author; drawing by J. Bogdanović)



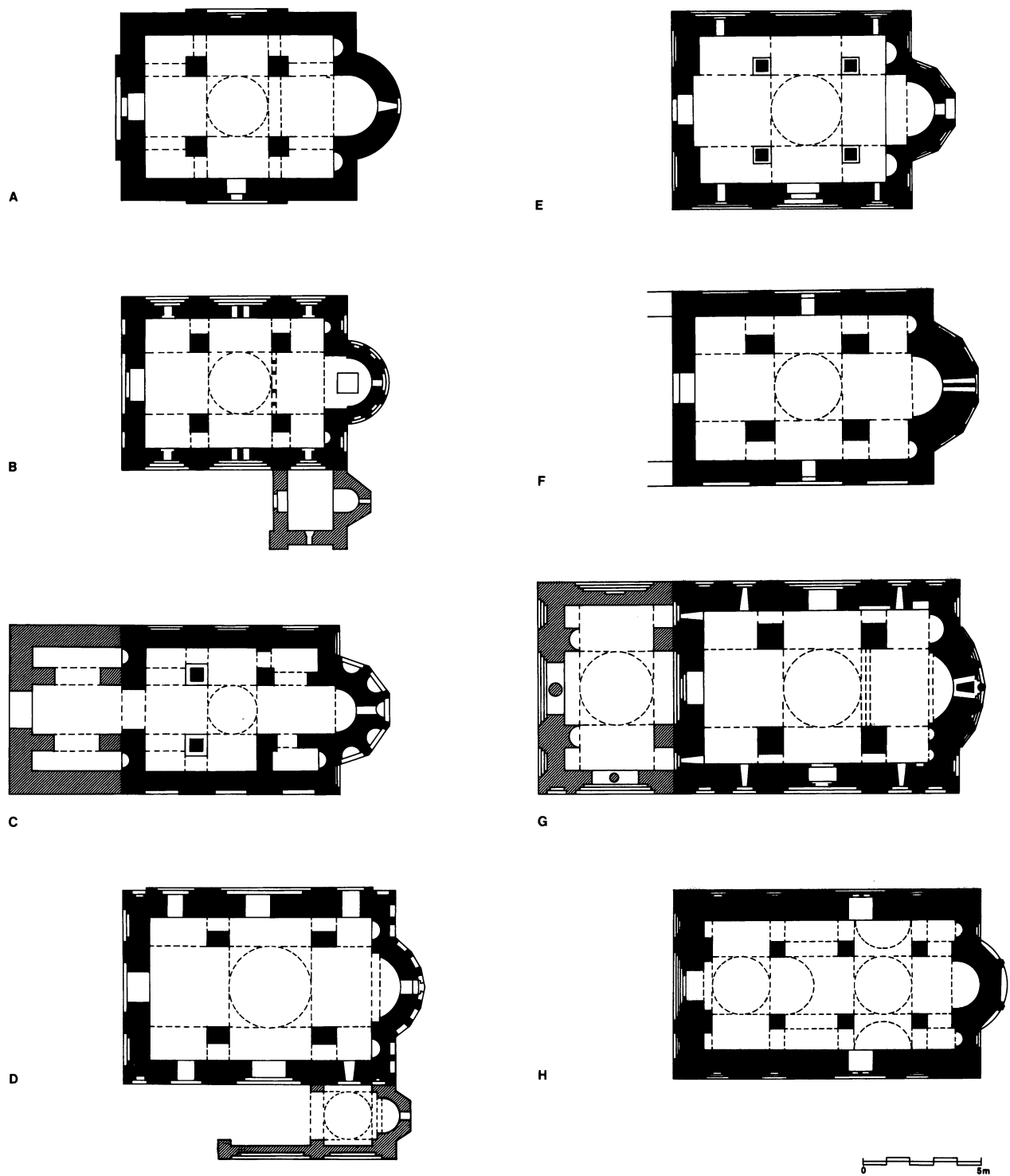
34 Meteora, Great Meteoron monastery, church of the Metamorphosis, the original church, from the southeast (photo: L. Bouras)



35 Map. Byzantine Empire and Serbia under King Milutin, ca. 1300 (author)



36 Map. Byzantine Macedonia. Region of conflicts between Byzantium and Serbia, showing fortifications newly built or restored (after M. Popović)



37 Plans of churches built by Serbian nobility: (A) Mušutište; (B) Čučer; (C) Kučevište; (D) Štip; (E) Ljuboten; (F) Konče; (G) Lesnovo; (H) Psača (drawing by J. Bogdanović)



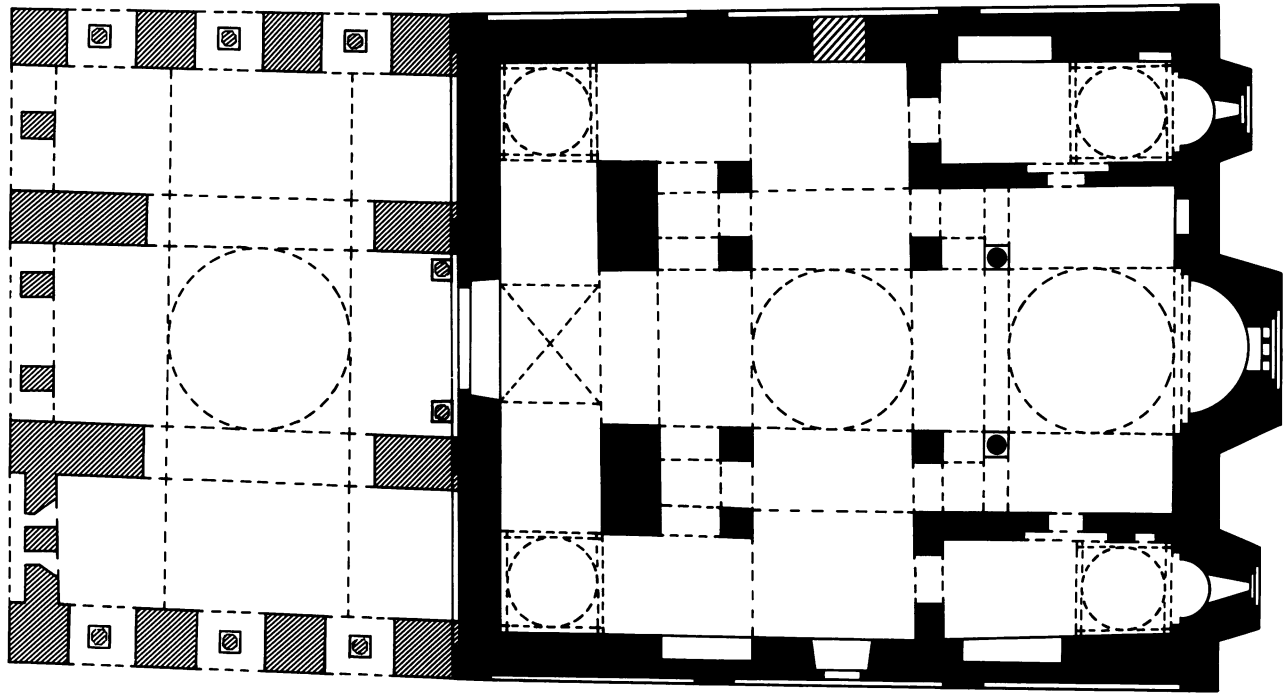
38 Čučer, St. Nikitas, dome, from the northwest



39 Mušutište, Mother of God Hodegetria, from the east, prior to destruction in 1999 (photo: J. Prolović)



40 Gračanica monastery, church of the Dormition, general view from the south



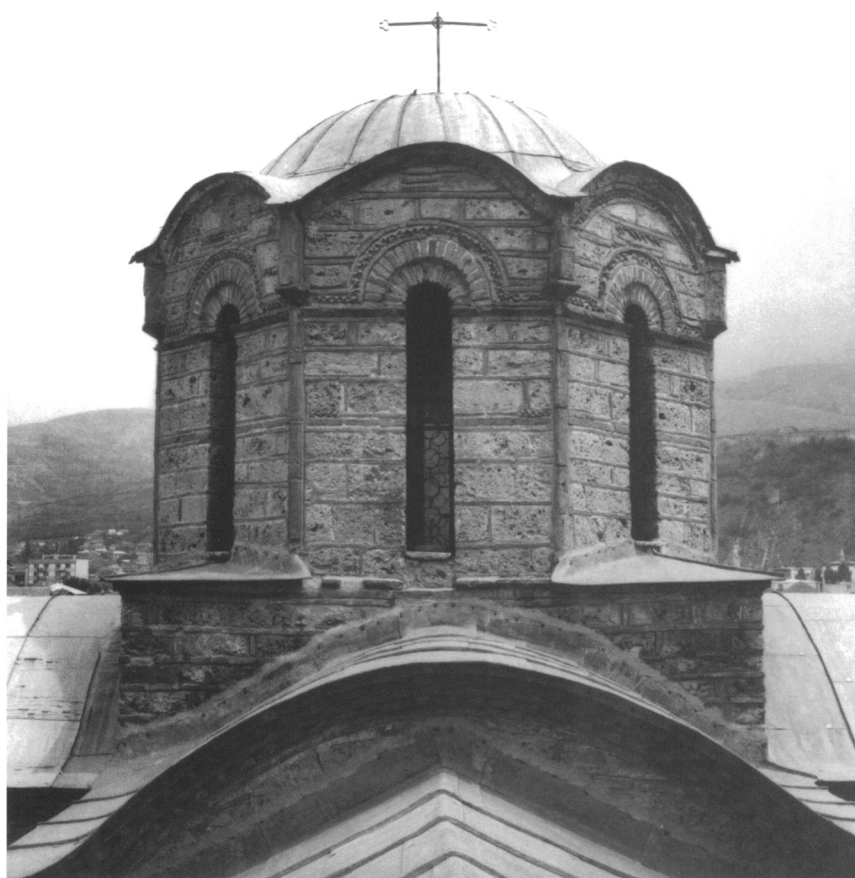
41 Gračanica monastery, church of the Dormition, plan



42 Gračanica monastery, church of the Dormition, main dome, from the south



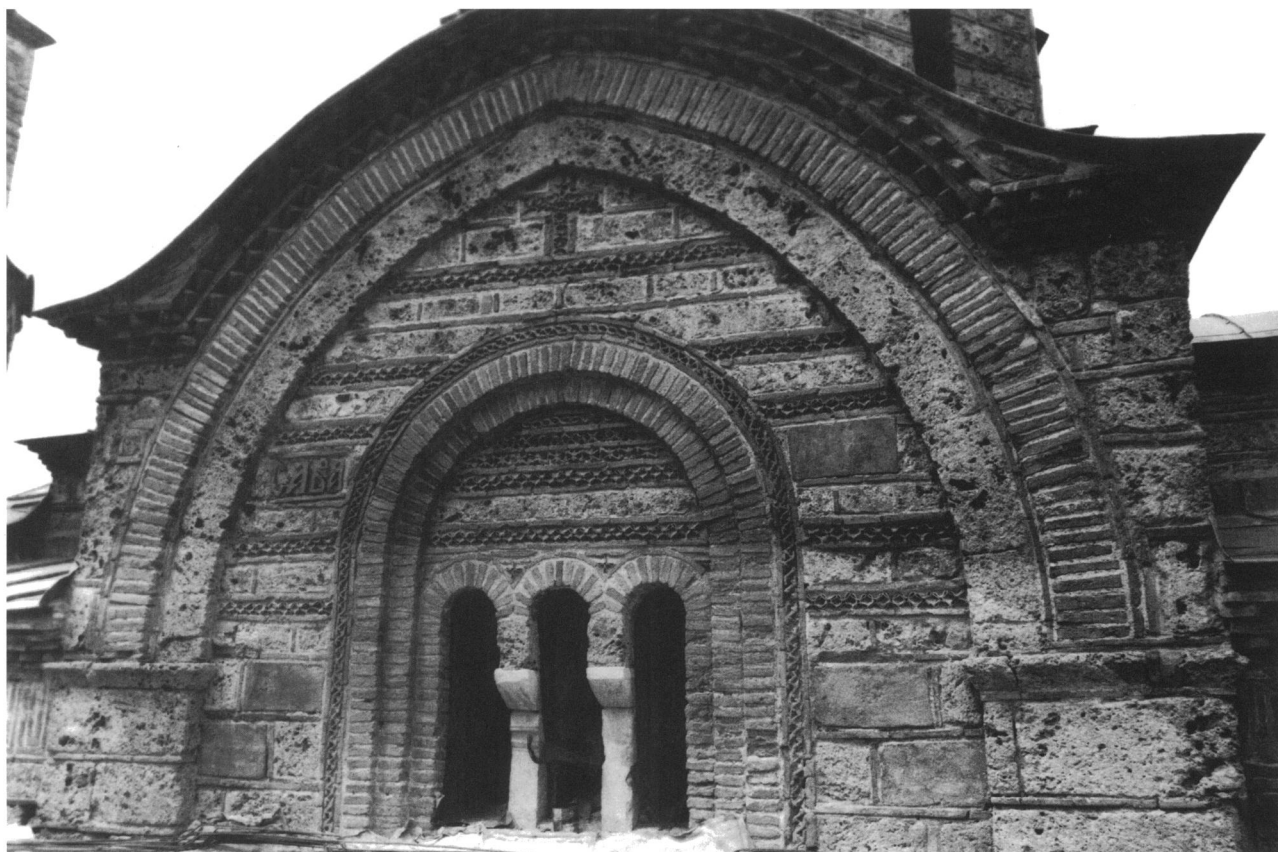
43 Gračanica monastery, church of the Dormition, SW minor dome, from the south



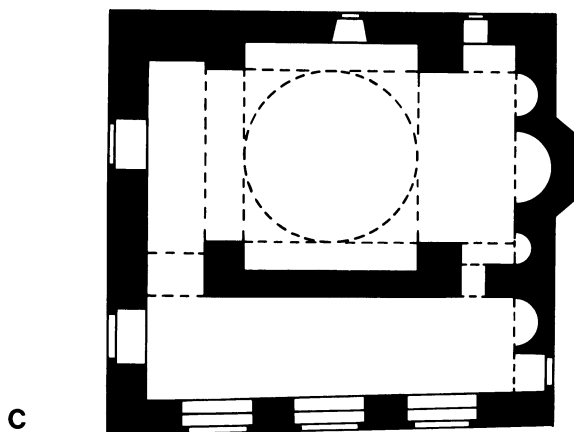
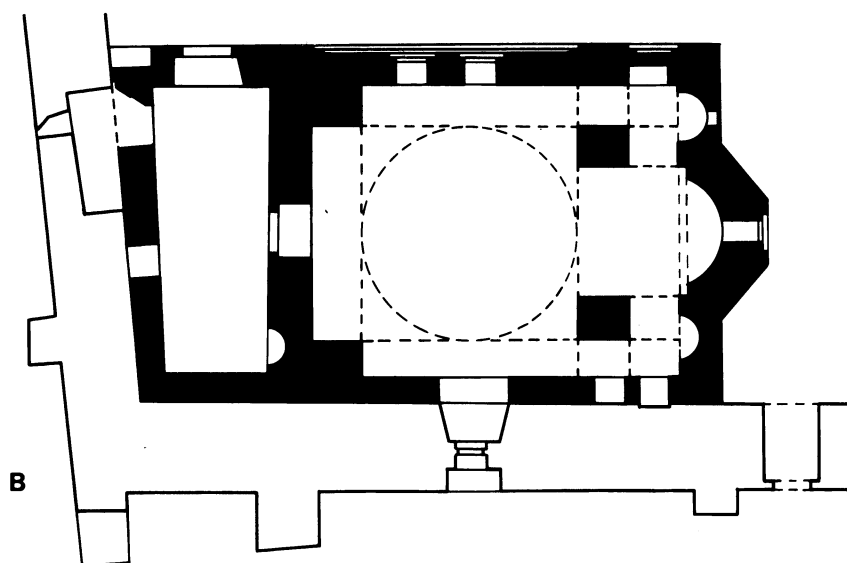
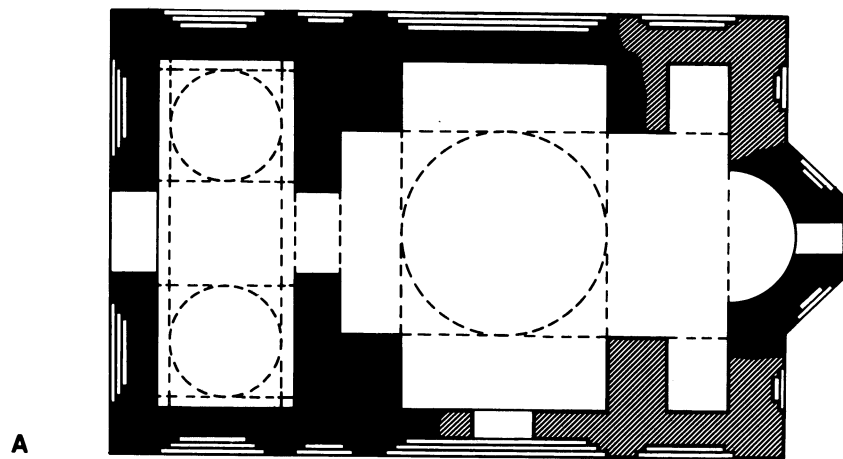
44 Prizren, Mother of God Ljeviša, main dome, from the west



45 Staro Nagoričino, St. George, main dome, from the southwest



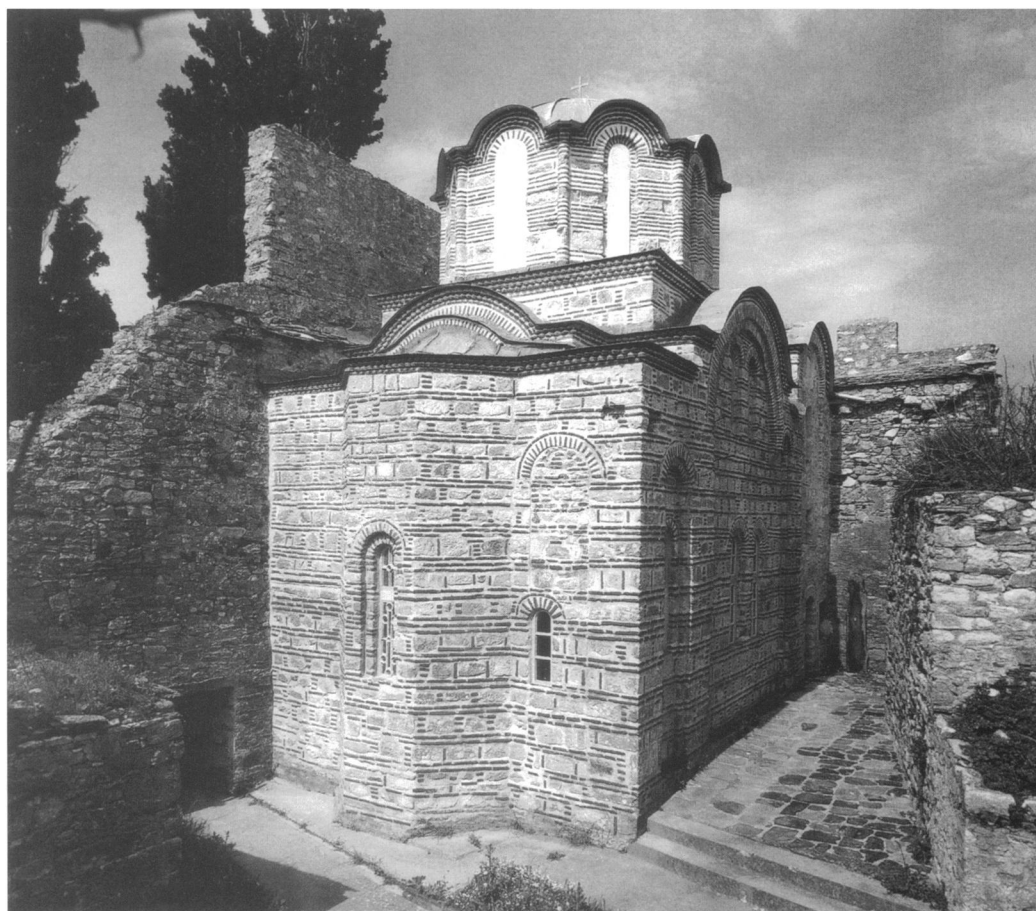
46 Prizren, Mother of God Ljeviša, south tympanum below main dome



47 Plans of churches associated with Stefan Dečanski and Dušan: (A) “Spasovica”; (B) Hrusija, St. Basil; (C) Hilandar, Holy Archangels (drawing by J. Bogdanović)



48 Peć, Patriarchate complex; Church of St. Demetrius, dome, from the northwest



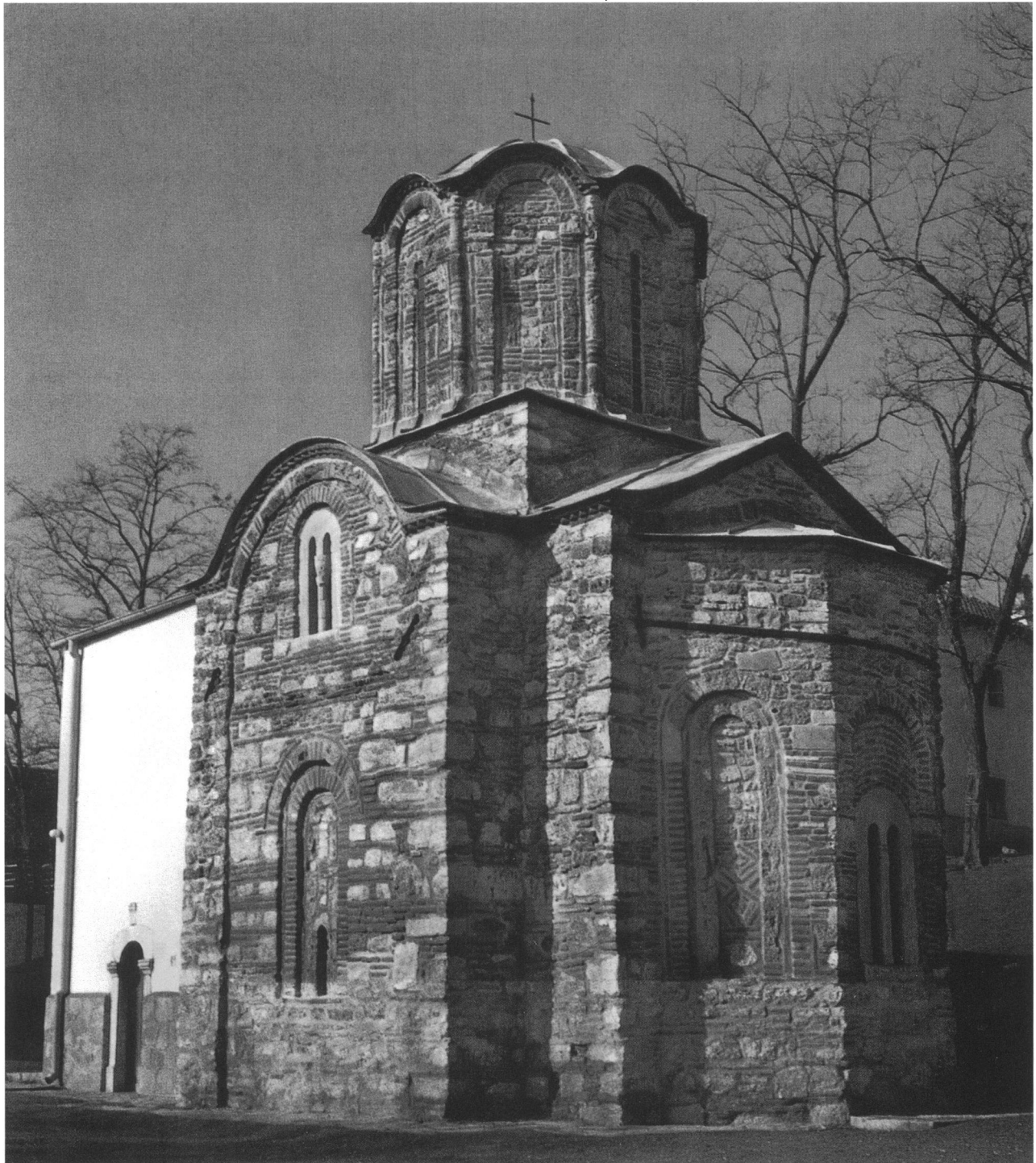
49 Mount Athos, Hrusija (near Hilandar), Church of St. Basil, from the northeast (photo: S. Barišić)



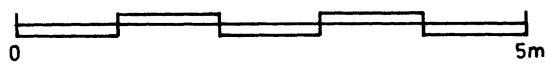
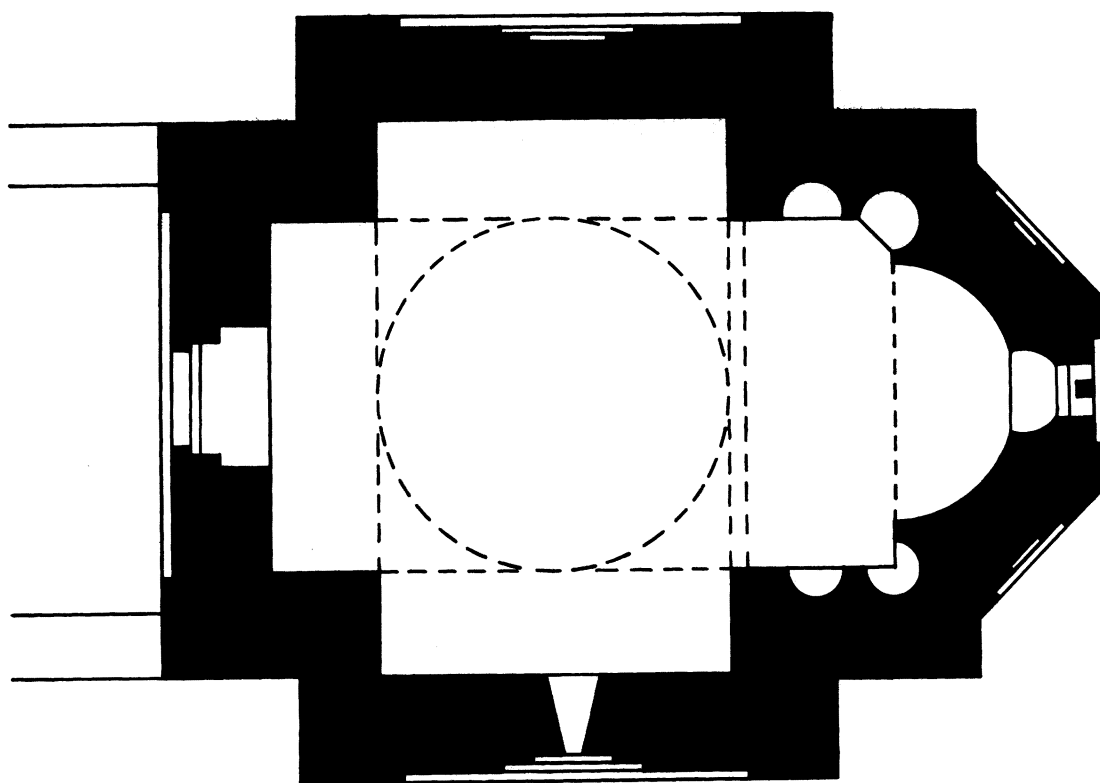
50 Mount Athos, Hilandar monastery, chapel of the Holy Archangels, dome, from the south (photo: S. Nenadović)



51 Mount Athos, Hilandar monastery, *katholikon*, exonarthex dome, from the south



52 Budisavci, church of the Transfiguration, from the southeast (after G. Subotić, *Art of Kosovo*, 35)



53 Budisavci, church of the Transfiguration, plan (drawing by J. Bogdanović)



54 Kučevište, church of the Presentation of the Mother of God, from the northeast (photo: Ch. Bouras)



55 Štip, Holy Archangels, dome, from the southeast



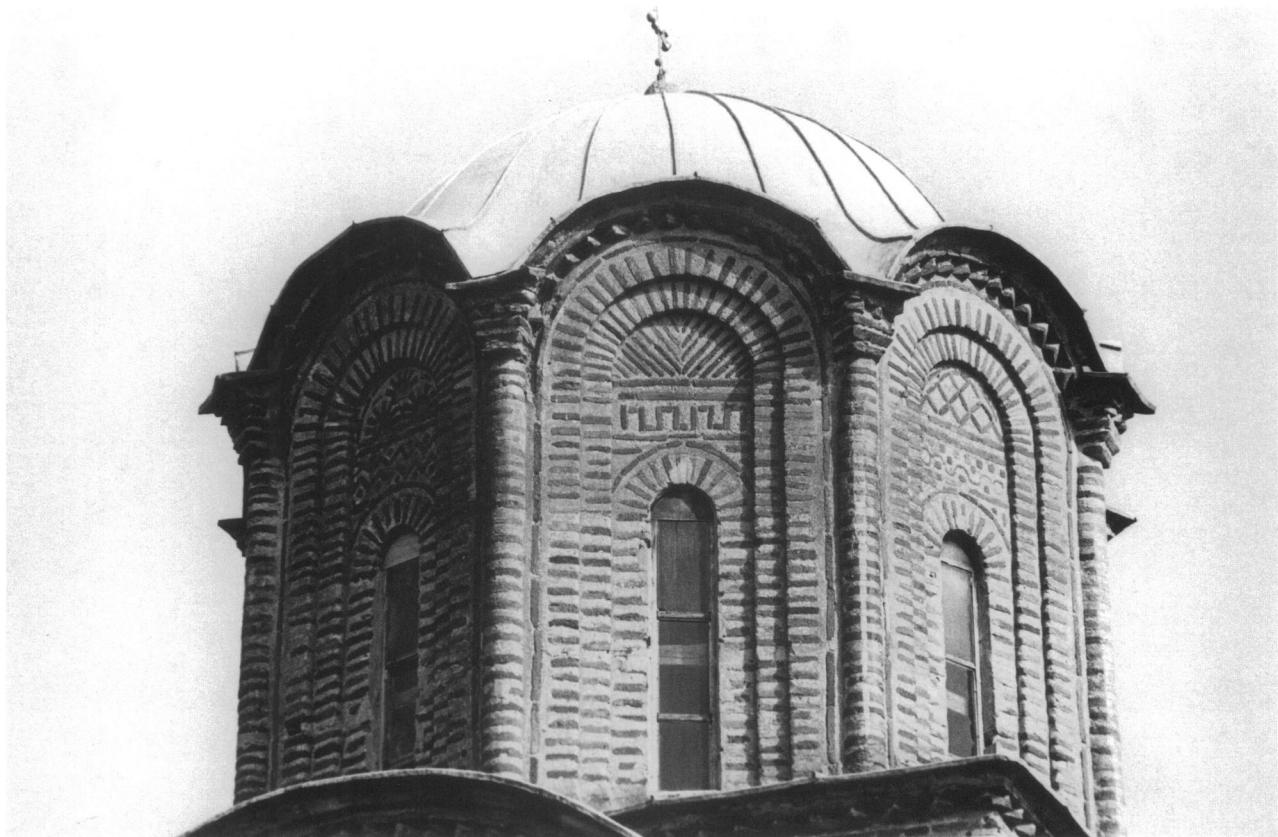
56 Štip, Holy Archangels before destruction of the domed *parekklesion*, from the southeast (photo: G. Millet)



57 Ljuboten, St. Nicholas, from the northeast (photo: G. Millet)



58 Lesnovo monastery, church of Archangel Michael, from the north



59 Lesnovo monastery, church of Archangel Michael, main dome, from the southeast



60 Lesnovo monastery, church of Archangel Michael, narthex dome, from the north



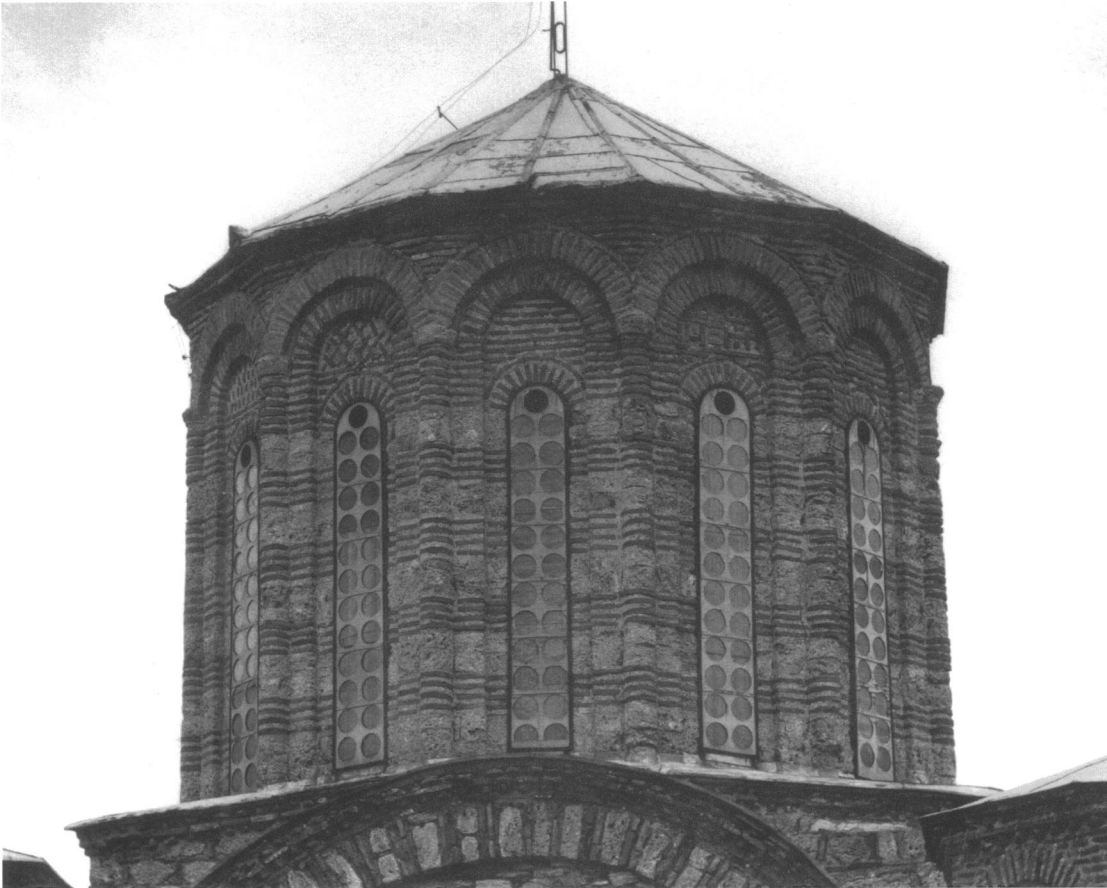
61 Psača, St. Nicholas, narthex dome, from the south



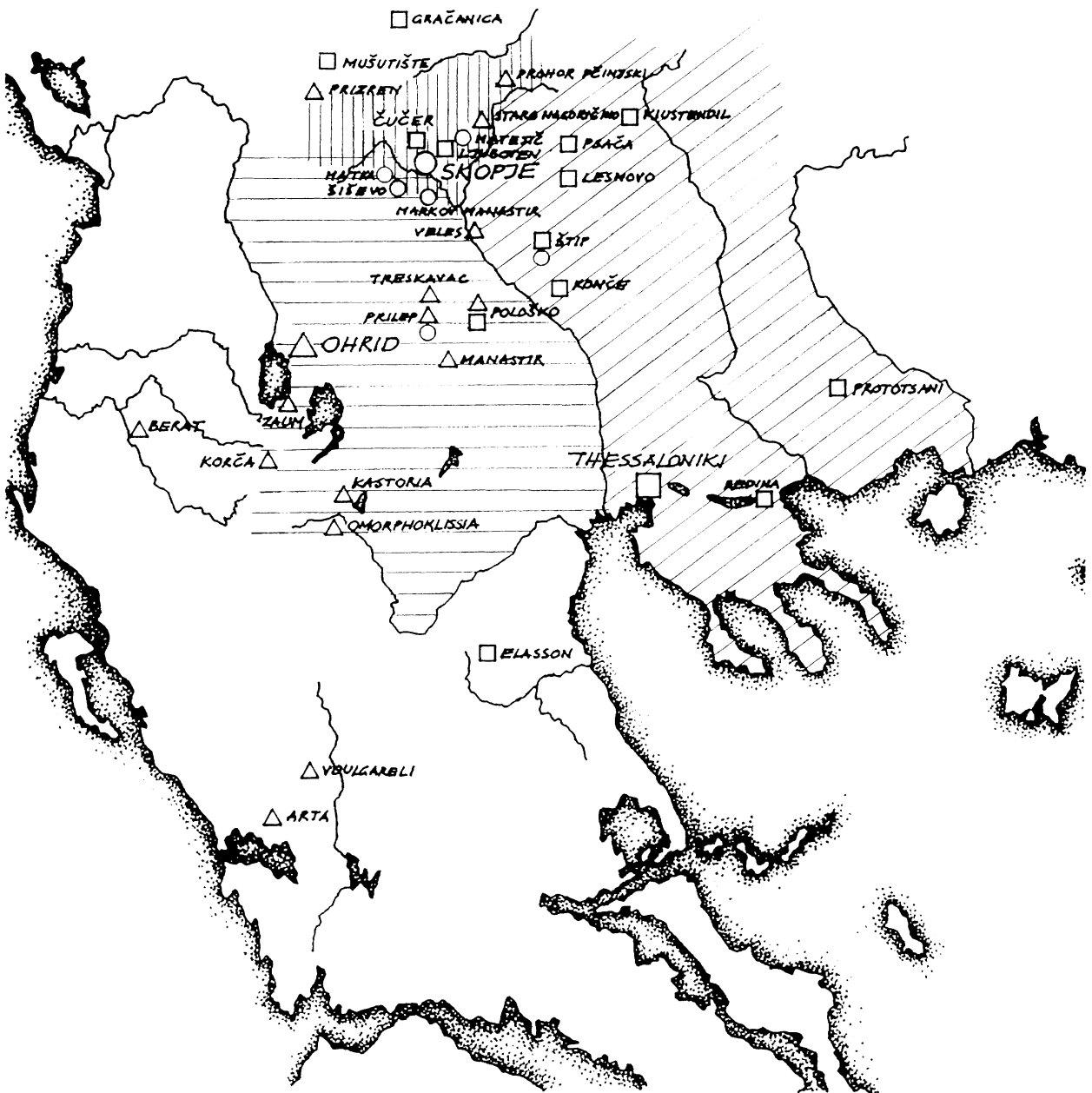
62 Matejić monastery, church of the Mother of God, from the northwest



63 Matejić monastery, church of the Mother of God, narthex, from the southwest



64 Matejić monastery, church of the Mother of God, main dome, from the west



65 Map. Region of Macedonia showing location of late Byzantine churches built in Thessalonian (□), Epirote (△), and Skopian (○) manner

be demonstrated by referring again to the main dome of the Paregoritissa at Arta (Fig. 2). The idiosyncratic nature of Epirote dome construction has not been observed in scholarship, but we must take note of it here as an integral part in the formative process of new building practice emerging in Thessalonike around 1300. It should also be noted in passing that the small domes of H. Aikaterine, according to the Velenis classification, belong to the “Macedonian dome” type while the main dome, in this case, does not.¹² Other Epirote technical characteristics that may be noted on the church of H. Aikaterine involve semi-circular tympana framing the main windows of the cross arms, recessed slightly from the face of the wall (Fig. 11). Among the many examples of such features in Epiros, one may refer to those on the church of Panagia Vellas at Voulgareli (Fig. 12).¹³ Likewise, one should note the use of recessed dog-tooth friezes as outlining devices on the façades of H. Aikaterine (Fig. 13). These, too, were standard features in the architecture of Epiros, as attested to by the east façade of the Paregoritissa at Arta (Fig. 14). For us, in the context of the present discussion, it is important to note that such features were extremely rare in Thessalonike. While it is obvious that the Epirote methods had some currency in Thessalonike, the input of Constantinopolitan architecture in the reemergence of architectural production in Thessalonike was by far the greatest.¹⁴ The means whereby this may have occurred are far from clear, however. An assumption has to be made that it probably took place via the Empire of Nicaea, especially after 1246, when Thessalonike came under the direct control of John III Vatatzes.¹⁵ In the course of the first half of the thirteenth century, Thessalonike had been entangled in complex struggles between different contenders for the Byzantine throne, with disastrous effects on the city itself.¹⁶ Left physically and economically ruined since the Norman sack of 1185, Thessalonike, as far as we know, was practically deprived of any building activity for decades. The revived architectural production in the city during the last decades of the thirteenth century, then, would imply that builders must have been brought in from elsewhere. It stands to reason that, in changed political conditions after 1261, new patterns of patronage began to emerge, putting “new” centers of architectural production—one of them being Thessalonike—on the map.

The role of H. Aikaterine has already been pointed out. I will return once more to the issue of the idiosyncratic nature of its eastern pair of domes (Fig. 8). Their design and manner of construction with alternating bands of brick and stone, as we have seen, were dif-

¹² Velenis, “Building Techniques,” fig. 12, illustrates only the southeastern minor dome of the church.

¹³ For the Panagia Vellas see A. Orlandos, “Μνημεῖα τοῦ Δεσποτάτου τῆς Ἠπείρου. Ἡ Κόκκινη Ἐκκλησιά (Παναγία Βελλᾶς),” *Ἡπειρωτικά Χρονικά* 2 (1927): 153–69; also H. Hallensleben, “Die Architektur-geschichtliche Stellung der Kirche Sv. Bogorodica Perivleptos (Sv. Kliment) in Ohrid,” *Zbornik. Arheološki muzej na Makedonija* 6–7 (1975): 297–316.

¹⁴ Views on this point differ. Vokotopoulos, “Church Architecture,” esp. 110 f, argues that the input of Constantinople was direct and considerable. The opposite point of view is maintained by Velenis, “Building Techniques,” esp. 95–99. The role of Epiros, as limited as it may have been, has generally been ignored.

¹⁵ This subject is deserving of a separate study. H. Buchwald, “Laskarid Architecture,” *JÖB* 28 (1979): 261–96, has provided an important introduction to the architecture under the patronage of the emperors of Nicaea. His observations on the *eclectic* origins of this architecture may stand useful comparisons with phenomena dealt with in our context. I am avoiding the terms *eclectic* and *eclecticism*, however, because they imply a conscious and deliberate choice of certain architectural features and formulae that, in my opinion, do not apply in the context under discussion here.

¹⁶ F. Bredenkamp, *The Byzantine Empire of Thessaloniki (1224–42)* (Thessalonike, 1996). See also articles in this volume by J. Barker, A. Laiou, and C. Morrisson.

ferent from those of its western pair of domes. The eastern domes of H. Aikaterine, for example, feature corner colonnettes that appear to be fully integrated with the surrounding masonry. The horizontal stone bands continue “through” the colonnettes, either because they were cut from the same block of stone or because individual pieces of stone were carefully aligned so that the horizontal “banding” was achieved. Such an approach to dome design and construction was common in Constantinopolitan architecture, from where it must have reached Thessalonike. Several fourteenth-century domes in Constantinople share these specific characteristics.¹⁷ A building of prime significance for our understanding of the links between the capital and Thessalonike, however, may be the *katholikon* of Hilandar monastery on Mount Athos. Built during the first decades of the fourteenth century, but certainly not after 1316, the Hilandar *katholikon* exhibits distinctive Constantinopolitan architectural traits.¹⁸ These include a pair of domes over the outermost bays of the narthex (Fig. 15). The two domes also exhibit some similarities with the eastern pair of domes of H. Aikaterine. Featuring octagonal drums, their corners marked by semi-cylindrical colonnettes and their faces perforated with single-light windows framed by double skewbacks, they rest on low square pedestals, separating them from the narthex roof. Similarly the building technique at both Hilandar and at H. Aikaterine involves bands of three brick courses alternating with bands comprising a single course of stone.

The presence of comparable, thus articulated domes in the architecture of Constantinople, as early as the late eleventh century, supports the notion that their origins ultimately must be Constantinopolitan, though by ca. 1300 they did acquire a life of their own in Thessalonike.¹⁹ Two Constantinopolitan domes—those of the church of Christos ho Pantepoptes (present-day Eski Imaret Camii), dated ca. 1081–87, and the main church of the Pammakaristos complex (now Fethiye Camii), variously dated to the eleventh or twelfth century—demonstrate that the mature form of the dome type described above, but executed fully in brick, was known in Constantinople long before 1204 (Fig. 16).²⁰ The

¹⁷ E.g., the main dome of the Parekklesion of Theotokos he Pammakaristos, as well as the main domes and the northern exonarthex dome of the *katholikon* of the Chora monastery; cf. W. Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen, 1977), fig. 123 (Pammakaristos); for the *katholikon* of the Chora, see R. Ousterhout, *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul*, DOS 25 (Washington, D.C., 1987), fig. 153, showing the domes during restoration work, with their plaster removed.

¹⁸ M. Marković and W. T. Hostetter, “Prilog hronologiji gradnje i oslikavanja hilendarskog katolika” (“On the Chronology of the Construction and the Painting of the Katholikon of the Hilandar Monastery”), *HilZb* 10 (1998): 201–17 (Eng. summary, 218–20), date the construction either to 1299–1306 or to 1311–16, during the reign of *hegoumenos* Nikodim. For the architecture of the Hilandar *katholikon* see: S. Nenadović, *Osam vekova Hilandara. Gradjenje i gradjevine* (Eight Centuries of Hilandar. Building and Buildings) (Belgrade, 1997), 59–99; S. Ćurčić, “The Architectural Significance of the Hilandar Katholikon,” *BSCAbstr* 4 (1978): 14–15, where the Constantinopolitan similarities are outlined, though they are deemed “conservative,” implying similarities with church architecture in the capital before 1204.

¹⁹ See, for example, the main dome of the church now known as Kilsise Camii (dated to ca. 1100); cf. R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th ed. (Harmondsworth, 1986), 362 f.

²⁰ For the church of the Pantepoptes, see R. Ousterhout, “Some Notes on the Construction of Christos ho Pantepoptes (Eski Imaret Camii) in Istanbul,” *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Έτ.* 16 (1991–92): 47–56. For the main church of the Pammakaristos complex see the thorough study of H. Hallensleben, “Untersuchungen zur Baugeschichte der ehemaligen Pammakaristoskirche, der heutigen Fethiye camii in Istanbul,” *IstMitt* 13–14 (1963–64): 128–93, esp. 144–46, for the building core (“Kernbau”). Hallensleben dates this part of the building to the 11th century, a date rejected by Mango in H. Belting, C. Mango, and D. Mouriki, *The Mosaics and Frescoes of St. Mary Pammakaristos (Fethiye Camii) at Istanbul*, DOS 25 (Washington, D.C., 1978), 3 ff, who prefers a 12th-century date.

appearance of domes of this type during the twelfth century, also on a number of churches in the central Balkans, is probably a reflection of the assertive policy of Emperor Manuel I in this region.²¹ One of these buildings, in addition to the already mentioned dome of the church of the Mother of God at Studenica monastery (Fig. 3), is the church of St. George in the village of Koluša, in the vicinity of Kiustendil, Bulgaria. Built entirely of brick, in the so-called recessed brick technique, the church has an octagonal dome drum with all of the essential characteristics of the type (Fig. 17).²² The church is not dated securely, but its plan and the building technique bespeak a middle Byzantine foundation. Future scholarship will need to resolve the question of how exactly the pre-1204 Constantinopolitan dome type may have reached Thessalonike a century later. What is beyond any doubt is that it, along with other building characteristics, became the essence of building practice in Thessalonike by around 1310, from where it was subsequently exported into the Balkans.

The unmistakable hallmark of Thessalonian building practice, as it emerged during the first two decades of the fourteenth century, was a very distinctive type of a church dome. I will refer to it as the “Thessalonian dome,” in deliberate contrast to the “Macedonian dome,” whose definition, as seen above, is essentially misleading.²³ Marked by all-brick construction, the Thessalonian dome is polygonal in plan (Figs. 18, 19). Its corners, as illustrated by the main dome of the church of H. Panteleimon, are marked by rounded colonnettes, while its faces feature triple-arched skewbacks, the innermost one framing a single-light window.²⁴ This specific building paradigm became the favorite cliché, as numerous surviving examples demonstrate. It should be noted in the exterior view that the individual colonnettes are not visibly set apart from the surrounding construction, in contrast to Epirote practice. The building core of H. Panteleimon was originally enveloped by domed *parekklesia*, and by an exonarthex, of which only the eastern ends of the *parekklesia* survive (Fig. 32A). Its oblong narthex features on the main axis a dome of the same basic

²¹ The main examples of such domes are on the churches of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi, F.Y.R.O.M., St. Nicholas at Kuršumljia, and the church of the Virgin at Studenica monastery, both in Serbia; on St. Nicholas at Sapareva Baniā, and the church in the village of Koluša, both in Bulgaria. For the first three see Krautheimer, *Architecture*, figs. 332 (Nerezi), 333 (Kuršumljia), and 391 (Studenica). For Sapareva Baniā, see K. Miāteŭ, *Arhitektura v srednovekovna Bŭlgariā* (Sofia, 1965), fig. 217. On the policies of Manuel I in the Balkans, see P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier* (Cambridge, 2000), chaps. 7 and 8.

²² For Koluša, before the modern restoration disfigured the building, see N. Mavrodinov, *Ednokrābnata i kr'stovidnata ts'rkva po bŭlgarskite zemi do kraia na XIV v.* (Sofia, 1931), 106, figs. 123, 124.

²³ Millet, *L'école grecque*, 189–201 (Byzantine domes in Greece), though the amount of space devoted to Thessalonian domes specifically is remarkably small (pp. 195–96). More about “Thessalonian domes” in S. Ćurčić, *Gračanica. King Milutin's Church and Its Place in Late Byzantine Architecture* (University Park, Pa.–London, 1979), 111–12, and also in M. Rautman, “The Church of the Holy Apostles in Thessaloniki: A Study in Early Palaeologan Architecture” (Ph.D. diss., University of Indiana, 1984), 202–5. This dissertation constitutes the only extensive study of architecture of any of the Thessalonian late Byzantine churches. Sadly, it, too, remains unpublished.

²⁴ H. Panteleimon was one of several churches in Thessalonike damaged by the earthquake of 1978, and subsequently restored. At the present it remains without an adequate publication. Its date and the dedication are still uncertain. For summary of the controversy from the current perspective, see E. Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou and A. Tourta, *Wandering in Byzantine Thessaloniki* (Thessalonike, 1997), 45. N. Ioanidou, “Ιστορική τοποθέτηση και αρχές επέμβασης, από τη μελέτη στερέωσης του ναού του Αγ. Παντελεήμονα” (“Historical Documentation and Intervention Principles of the Conservation Study of the Church of St. Panteleimon”), in P. Astrinidou, ed., *Restoration of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments* (Thessalonike, 1986), 131–45, despite some mistakes, contains much useful information not available otherwise.

type as the main dome. Its principal distinguishing feature is that it is “rotated” in such a way that its colonnettes, and not its windows, are aligned with the main building axis. The same characteristics were shared by the two domes over the lateral chapels that no longer survive. They were aligned with the main dome along the transversal axis, creating an unusual but effective exterior building design (Fig. 20).

In addition to H. Panteleimon, domes of the same type, as we have already seen, appeared also on the Holy Apostles, built in 1310–14 (Figs. 1, 5, 6).²⁵ After the middle of the century the same type recurs on the little church of Metamorphosis (also known as Christos Sotir) of around 1357, in the rebuilding of the *katholikon* of Vlatadon monastery, and finally in the 1360s or 1370s, on the church of Profitis Elias, possibly the *katholikon* of the erstwhile Akapniou monastery (Figs. 21, 22, 23).²⁶ On the basis of the design and construction characteristics of domes on these churches, it is possible to claim that a building workshop, or indeed several related workshops with a standardized building practice, were at work in Thessalonike from ca. 1300 to ca. 1370. This notion is substantiated by the widespread appearance of “Thessalonian domes” during this interval of time. Our attention will first be turned to the monuments with “Thessalonian domes” on Byzantine territories, and then to the radiation of the formula into the neighboring territories under Serbian control.

The first example is situated at Rentina, a small settlement above a natural pass through which the Via Egnatia made its way east, just before reaching the Bay of Orphanos (Kolpos Orphanou). One of the few standing buildings preserved at Rentina is a small cruciform domed church that survives in a ruinous state (Figs. 24, 25).²⁷ Although nothing of its interior decoration is preserved, and we lack any historical evidence regarding its construction, there can be little doubt that this monument belongs to the first decades of the fourteenth century. Its superstructure was carefully built, entirely of brick, its internally cylindrical dome drum resting directly on a system of regular pendentives. Externally the dome drum is eight-sided. Four of the eight faces of its drum—those situated on the diagonals, rather than those on the main axes—once contained windows. The other four arcades contained shallow rectangular niches filled with decorative brick patterns (Fig. 26). Both the niches and the window openings were framed by double skewbacks. At each corner of the drum was a round colonnette, made of specially shaped, care-

²⁵ The dating of this key monument of late Byzantine architecture has become a subject of controversy as a result of the publication by I. Kuniholm and C. Striker, “Dendrochronology and the Architectural History of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Thessaloniki,” *Architectura* 20.1 (1990): 1–26, who propose 1329+ as its construction date. On account of the presence of brick and marble monograms on the exonarthex façades, as well as a carved inscription on the lintel above the main portal, all of which identify Patriarch Niphon (1310–14) as the *ktitor*, for me it is impossible to accept the dating proposed by Kuniholm and Striker.

²⁶ For the Metamorphosis, see Ch. Mavropoulou-Tsioumi and K. Theocharidou-Tsapralé, eds., *Η αναστήλωση των βυζαντινών και μεταβυζαντινών μνημείων στη Θεσσαλονίκη* (Thessalonike, 1985), 91–101. For Vlatadon, see *ibid.*, 84–90, and more recently E. Hadjitryphonos, “Το περίστωο στην εκκλησιαστική αρχιτεκτονική της ονίμης περιόδου της Βυζαντινής Αυτοκρατορίας” (“Peristoon in ecclesiastical architecture of the Late Byzantine Empire”), 2 vols., Ph.D. diss., Department of Architecture, Aristotle University of Thessalonike, 2000, 123–27. For Profitis Elias, see T. Papazotos, “The Identification of the Church of ‘Profitis Elias’ in Thessaloniki,” *DOP* 45 (1991): 121–27. The church of Profitis Elias was drastically restored from 1956 to 1961. With the exception of the main dome, all of its minor domes were completely rebuilt at this time. They cannot, therefore, be used as evidence in the context of our discussion.

²⁷ N. K. Moutsopoulos, *Ρεντίνα IV. Οι εκκλησίες του βυζαντινού οικισμού* [Rentina IV. The Churches of the Byzantine Burg] (Thessalonike, 2000), 295–334.

fully laid bricks (Fig. 27). Their flat ends are imbedded in the masonry mass, their semi-circular ends protruding, and collectively forming the semi-cylindrical form of each colonnette. All of these details match such details on Thessalonian monuments that we have seen, and undoubtedly must have been the work of a group of builders brought to Rendina from the regional capital. As we examine the exterior of this and other comparable domes, we may ponder what their original appearance may have actually been.

Our ruminations, in this regard, are aided by another dome that may well belong to this larger family—the dome rising over the chapel of St. Nicholas, above the exonarthex of the *katholikon* at the Prodromos monastery near Serres (Fig. 28).²⁸ Probably built ca. 1364–65, the dome of this chapel preserves an external coating of demonstrably later plaster with various architectural features rendered in paint. Particularly interesting in this regard are the painted lion masks that occur atop its semi-cylindrical corner colonnettes.²⁹ Their placement and formal articulation suggest the possibility of their distant origins in early middle Byzantine architecture and beyond, as the marble-faced dome drum of the tenth-century church of the Panagia at Hosios Loukas monastery informs us (Fig. 29).³⁰ Here the lion masks still had the function of waterspouts, as they did in classical architecture, from where the idea was presumably appropriated. Their original function completely forgotten by the fourteenth century, the painted emulation of such lion masks may have been as meaningful an echo of the distant prototypes as was the mimicking of small classical columns by virtue of the form and placement of the corner colonnettes. The Serres dome, with its now invisible construction technique, leaves us with an important but unanswerable question, whether, indeed, all these domes and church façades originally may not have been covered with plaster and painted.³¹

Situated southwest of Thessalonike, in the opposite direction from Serres, the church of Panagia Olympiotissa at Elasson, in Thessaly, provides another example of Thessalonian impact on church architecture in the surrounding areas.³² Built probably around 1300, the Olympiotissa displays a dome elevated on a tall drum (Fig. 30). In terms of its

²⁸ H. Hallensleben, “Das Katholikon des Johannes-Prodromos-Klosters bei Serrai,” *ByzF* 1 (= *Polychordia. Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*) (1966): 158–73, is currently the only study of the architecture of this important church. Hallensleben dates the chapel of St. Nicholas erroneously to 1344–45 and attributes it to Stefan Dušan. For the correction of dating, see G. Subotić and S. Kissas, “Nadgrobnni natpis sestre despota Jovana Uglješe na Menikenskoj gori” (“L’építaphe de la soeur du despote Jean Uglješa au Mont Ménécée”), *ZRVI* 16 (1975): 161–81.

²⁹ To my knowledge, these painted features on the exterior of the dome of the chapel of St. Nicholas have never been discussed. The entire *katholikon*, along with its exonarthex and the belfry, is coated with painted plaster, all deserving of careful examination.

³⁰ L. Boura, *Ὁ γλυπτός διάκοσμος τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Παναγίας στὸ μοναστήρι τοῦ Ὁσίου Λουκά* (Athens, 1980), esp. 37–48, who discusses several other middle Byzantine sculptural examples related to H. Loukas.

³¹ For the preliminary formulation of the much larger question, see S. Ćurčić, *Middle Byzantine Architecture on Cyprus: Provincial or Regional?* (Nicosia, 2000), esp. 19 ff.

³² The Olympiotissa has been a subject of several studies in recent years. Two dissertations have addressed the architecture of the church explicitly: M. Hatjigiannis, “L’architecture byzantine à l’époque des Paléologues: Le cas du Catholicon de Olympiotissa à Elasson (Thessalie)” (Ph.D. diss., Université de Paris, Panthéon-Sorbonne, 1989), and K. Englert, *Der Bautypus der Umgangskirche unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Panagia Olympiotissa in Elasson* (Frankfurt a. M.–Bern–New York–Paris, 1991). See also M. Hatziyanni, “Relations architecturales entre la Thessalie et la Macédoine à l’époque des Paléologues: Le cas du catholicon de l’Olympiotissa à Élasson,” *Θεσσαλία. Δεκαπέντε χρόνια αρχαιολογικής έρευνας 1975–90*, vol. 2 (Athens, 1994), 371–86, where certain architectural phenomena relevant to this context are discussed.

design, construction, and detailing, this dome is practically indistinguishable from those on the Thessalonian churches (Figs. 5, 21, 22). Moreover, the Olympiotissa displays other important idiosyncratic affinities with Thessalonian churches. Foremost among these is the essentially symmetrical disposition of its plan, featuring a domed naos, enveloped on three sides by a *peristoon*, a multipurpose space with which it forms an integral whole (Fig. 31).³³ Such planning has been noted as one of the hallmarks of Thessalonian churches, and has been assessed as a deliberate emulation of a distinctive local architectural prototype under the auspices of a local class of ecclesiastical patrons (Fig. 32).³⁴ The pronounced similarity in the planning of the Olympiotissa with the churches of H. Panteleimon, H. Aikaterine, and H. Apostoloi in Thessalonike, of course, cannot be explained using the same arguments.

The latest of the group of churches featuring a “Thessalonian dome” was actually built after the first fall of Thessalonike to the Ottomans in 1387. Originally built as a small *katholikon* of a new monastery of Great Meteoron in Meteora, in 1387–88, the church of Metamorphosis was subsequently (1544–45) incorporated into a much larger new *katholikon* (Figs. 33b and 33a, respectively).³⁵ Although its western part was destroyed at that time, most of the original church, including its dome, remains intact, now serving as the sanctuary of the new *katholikon*. The externally partially visible dome of the old *katholikon* belongs to the type I have identified as the “Thessalonian dome” (Fig. 34). Though displaying unusually squat proportions in other respects, this dome has all the characteristics of “Thessalonian domes.” Its very late date suggests that it may well be the last medieval example of this dome type. In fact, it may have been built by builders from Thessalonike sent fleeing from the city in the aftermath of the first Ottoman conquest in 1387.

A number of other, small churches in present-day northern Greece belong to the Palaiologan period, and several of them may well be associated with Thessalonian workshops, though their domes no longer survive. Among these I will mention only the churches of St. Panteleimon, near the village of Prototsani, near Drama and that of H. Nikolaos, near the village of Pyli (Vineni) on Lake Mikra Prespa, both dated to the late thirteenth century.³⁶ Both churches are now in ruins, lacking their original domes. Their external wall articulation, as well as their building technique, points to Thessalonike as the most likely source of their builders. From the foregoing, it may be concluded that the impact of Thessalonike in the region of Macedonia, and to a somewhat lesser degree in Thessaly, during the period spanning the late thirteenth to the late fourteenth century, was considerable.

The impact of Thessalonike on the architecture of various parts of Byzantine Macedonia and Thessaly, significant as it was, was eclipsed by its impact on neighboring Ser-

³³ Hadjistryphonos, “Το περίστωο,” vol. 1, 128–29 and *passim*, where issues pertaining to the function and architectural integration of such spaces into larger church buildings are discussed in detail.

³⁴ Rautman, “Patrons and Buildings,” esp. 312 f; who believes that Hagia Sophia in Thessalonike served as the local prototype that influenced the planning of most Palaiologan churches in the city. It is difficult to accept this notion for a number of reasons, not the least among them being major differences of function and scale among the buildings in question.

³⁵ P. L. Theocharides, “Το παρεκκλήσι του Προδρόμου στο Μεγάλο Μετέωρο,” in *Εκκλησίες στην Ελλάδα μετά την Άλωση* (Athens, 1979), 121–36, provides a useful general chronology of the monastery (p. 132).

³⁶ For Prototsani see G. Velenis, “Ένας Παλαιοιόγειος ναός στην περιοχή Δράμας,” *Επιστημονική έπετηρίδα της Πολυτεχνικής Σχολής, Τμήμα αρχιτεκτόνων* 6 (Thessalonike, 1973), 83–108. For Pyli, see N. Moutsopoulos, “Ο Άγιος Νικόλαος Πύλης (Βινένης),” *Τό αρχαιολογικό έργο στη Μακεδονία και Θράκη* 4, 1990 (1993): 45–65.

bia.³⁷ During the last decades of the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth century, Serbia emerged as the major power in the Balkans. The territorial ambitions of the Serbian king Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1282–1321) during the first half of his reign, from 1282 to 1299, saw an expansion of the Serbian state into the region of Macedonia (Fig. 35).³⁸ The Byzantine loss of Skopje in 1282, and the failed attempt by Emperor Michael VIII to mount a significant counter-campaign, ending with his death in December 1282, initiated a period of major confrontation between the Serbs and the Byzantines. Successive Byzantine military failures led to a flurry of diplomatic activity under the leadership of Theodore Metochites that climaxed with a peace treaty in 1299, sealed by the marriage of King Milutin to Simonis, the young daughter of Andronikos II. An extensive program of reconstruction of old fortifications and the construction of new ones within the territory of Byzantine Macedonia must have been chiefly responsible for the transformation of this thirteenth-century backwater region into a vast construction site during the last decades of the same century (Fig. 36).³⁹

It was in those circumstances that Thessalonike became a veritable “architectural Mecca” of the Byzantine Empire. The city became the home of the second imperial household, when Empress Yolanda-Irene moved her own court there. Periods of residence of the empress, various other high-ranking figures, such as Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotes, Makarios Choumnos, Theodore Metochites, as well as the Serbian king Milutin, short as they may have been, attest to the new level of importance to which Thessalonike had risen at the time. Within its ancient city walls, themselves an object of extensive repairs and improvements, many new churches and monasteries arose.⁴⁰ The city, left devastated and substantially depopulated following the Norman sack of 1185, the twenty years of Latin control after 1204, and a tug-of-war between the main contenders for the Byzantine throne from 1204 to 1261, came back to life in a remarkable fashion, at the latest by 1282. The volume of construction must have reached its peak during the first two decades of the fourteenth century, followed by a period of relative stagnation, and then yet another, lesser peak of building activity from ca. 1350–ca. 1370.⁴¹ Starting with King Milutin’s patronage of architecture in Serbia, especially after his marriage to Simonis in 1299 until his death in 1321, major commissions began to occur outside Byzantine territories, attracting Byzantine builders to the lands of the former archenemy of the empire. This trend intensified after Milutin’s grandson Dušan assumed the Serbian throne, first as king (1331–46), and then as the emperor of the Serbs and the Greeks (1346–55). The surviving churches, as we will be able to see, reflect this pattern of development that made Serbian patrons the principal employers of Byzantine, and particularly Thessalonian, builders.

³⁷ Ćurčić, *Gračanica*, chap. 1 (“Political and Cultural Conditions in Serbia under King Milutin”).

³⁸ M. Živojinović, “La frontière serbobyzantine dans les premières décennies du XI^e siècle,” in *Βυζάντιο και Σερβία κατά τον ΙΔ΄ αιώνα*, ed. E. Papadopoulou and D. Dialeti (Athens, 1996), 57–66.

³⁹ M. Popović, “Les forteresses dans les régions des conflits byzantinoserbes au XI^e siècle,” in *Βυζάντιο και Σερβία* (as above, note 38), 67–87. Practically simultaneously appeared also I. Mikuljčić, *Srednovekovni gradovi i tvrđini vo Makedonija* (Medieval Towns and Castles in the Republic of Macedonia) (Skopje, 1996), a major study of medieval fortifications on the territory of the F.Y.R.O.M.

⁴⁰ For the late Byzantine interventions on the city walls of Thessalonike, see G. Gounaris, *The Walls of Thessaloniki* (Thessalonike, 1982), 15–17. On urban developments in late Byzantine Thessalonike, see the article by Ch. Bakirtzis in this volume.

⁴¹ Rautman, “Patrons and Buildings,” and Papazotos, “Identification,” esp. 127.

The first phase of this development is associated with the intensive architectural patronage of King Milutin, credited by the author of his Life with building as many as fifteen churches, seven of which have survived or have been positively identified.⁴² Of these, one—St. Niketas at Čučer (Banjani), near Skopje (built ca. 1307)—may be positively linked to a Thessalonian workshop.⁴³ Displaying many conservative traits, it is a four-piered, cross-in-square building without a narthex, and with a single polygonal apse (Fig. 37, B).⁴⁴ A chapel once abutting the church at its southeast corner was added shortly after the completion of the building, but was destroyed during a restoration in 1928.⁴⁵ The walls of the church, built using alternating bands of two to three courses of brick and single courses of stone, recall wall construction of the Holy Apostles in Thessalonike. The resemblance between the two churches, if we compare their domes, leaves no doubt regarding the origins of St. Niketas' builders (Figs. 38 and 5). The dome of St. Niketas follows the Thessalonian formula in all respects: all-brick construction, triple skewbacks, and corner colonnettes fully merged with the surrounding wall fabric. As such, it is the earliest dated example of the "Thessalonian dome" on a church built under the auspices of King Milutin on the territory of his state.

In several respects closely related to the church of St. Niketas was the church of the Mother of God Hodegetria in the village of Mušutište in the region of Kosovo. Virtually identical in plan and practically of the same dimensions, this church, unlike St. Niketas, was a private foundation (Fig. 37, A). Other similarities include aspects of the building technique and, most notably, the Thessalonian dome with its characteristic all-brick construction, triple skewbacks framing individual window openings, and slender cylindrical corner colonnettes (Fig. 39). The church was built in 1314–15 by a local nobleman, Jovan Dragoslav, with his wife Jelena, their son Staniša and daughter Ana, according to an inscription that was carved on a stone lintel above the main church portal.⁴⁶ Sadly, the

⁴² Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, ed. Dj. Daničić (Zagreb, 1886; 2d ed. London, 1972), 132–51. A fundamental account of medieval church building in Serbia, despite its early date, remains V. Marković, *Pravoslavno monaštvo i manastiri u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji* (Orthodox monasticism and monasteries in medieval Serbia) (Sremski Karlovci, 1920), esp. 89–98, for the reign of King Milutin. Most recently the subject of King Milutin's patronage of the arts was discussed exhaustively by B. Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting. The Age of King Milutin* (Belgrade, 1999), 7–30.

⁴³ The monastery church of St. Niketas is situated near the villages of Čučer and Banjani, on the outskirts of Skopje. Most commonly it is referred to as being at Čučer, but occasionally the location is given as Banjani, thus potentially causing confusion. For a general discussion see P. Miljković-Peppek, "Crkvata Sv. Nikita vo Skopska Crna Gora kako istorisko-umetnički spomenik," in *Spomenici na srednovekovnata i ponovata istorija na Makedonija*, vol. 1 (Skopje, 1975), 379–86. The main study of its architecture remains Ž. Tatić, "Arhitektonski spomenici u Skopskoj Crnoj Gori," *Glasnik Skopskog naučnog društva* 12 (1933): 127–34. The dating of the church is uncertain, but it was built by King Milutin, as we learn from the king's Life; cf. Arhiepiskop Danilo, *Životi*, 138. Its frescoes are generally dated as late as ca. 1320; cf. Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting*, 343–46.

⁴⁴ S. Ćurčić, "Articulation of Church Façades during the First Half of the Fourteenth Century. A Study of the Relationship of Byzantine and Serbian Architecture," in *Vizantijska umetnost početkom XIV veka (L'art byzantin au début du XIV^e siècle)*, ed. S. Petković (Belgrade, 1978), esp. 21 f.

⁴⁵ The chapel, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, was also commissioned by King Milutin; cf. V. R. Petković, *Pregled crkava kroz povescnicu srpskog naroda* (Belgrade, 1950), 212.

⁴⁶ This important monument has received only limited scholarly attention. The pioneering study on the church and its frescoes was that of V. J. Djurić, "Nepoznati spomenici srpskog srednjovekovnog slikarstva u Metohiji—I" [Monuments inconnus de la peinture Serbe médiévale à Metohija—I], *Starine Kosova i Metohije* 2–3 (Priština, 1963): 61–89, esp. 61–67. For a summary of up-to-date scholarship on the church of the Mother of God at Mušutište, see I. Djordjević, *Zidno slikarstvo srpske vlastele u doba Nemanjića* [Wall Paintings of the Ser-

church of the Mother of God at Mušutište was the victim of wanton destruction in July 1999. It was one of several medieval churches in the region of Kosovo completely blown up only weeks after the United Nations military force, KFOR, took control of the province.⁴⁷ Its loss is all the greater because it was the oldest documented private church foundation built by a Serbian nobleman. To make matters worse, its architecture and frescoes had received only a limited amount of attention up to the time of its demise.

The church of the Annunciation (subsequently Dormition of the Virgin) at Gračanica monastery, six miles south of Priština, in the region of Kosovo, was a far more complex, royal enterprise (Fig. 40).⁴⁸ Gračanica was apparently the work of a crew made up of builders from different centers, whose combined talents produced a building in a class of its own. Begun possibly as early as 1311 under the auspices of King Milutin, the church reveals thorough awareness of the church planning in vogue at the time in Thessalonike (Figs. 41 and 32). The most notable Thessalonian aspects of Gračanica's design, however, are its five domes (Figs. 42, 43). Featuring all-brick construction, they are characterized by double skewbacks and characteristic cylindrical corner colonnettes. It is not inconsequential here to point out the differences between the articulation of Gračanica's "Thessalonian domes" and those on two other major five-domed churches commissioned by King Milutin: the church of the Mother of God Ljeviška (Bogorodica Ljeviška) in Prizren, in the region of Kosovo (built in 1306–7), and the church of St. George at Staro Nagoričino, near Kumanovo, F.Y.R.O.M. (built in 1312–13). Despite certain similarities with Gračanica in their overall design conception, the two churches have domes whose forms and detailing are quite different (Figs. 44, 45).⁴⁹ The faces of their drums are relatively flat, this being especially pronounced at Prizren, and both domes reveal extensive use of stone as one of the building materials. Their corner colonnettes, in addition to being different in design, in both cases clearly stand apart from the surrounding masonry. Occasional visual accents appear on the domes and elsewhere on the two churches, in the form of decorative friezes and other designs made up of small specially cut tiles and cruciform terra-cotta jars set into mortar with their openings facing out (Fig. 46). These are true hallmarks of Epirote construction, as may be attested to by referring once more to the Panagia Paregoritissa at Arta (Fig. 14). The same elements do not appear on any of the Thessalonian churches, nor on any of King Milutin's buildings featuring "Thessalonian domes."

Following the death of King Milutin in 1321, the Thessalonian input in the church architecture of Serbia apparently continued, though the number of datable relevant buildings that may be associated with the reign of his successor, Stefan Uroš III Dečanski (1321–31), is relatively limited. Unfortunately, the one building that seems to have displayed

bian Nobility of the Nemanjić Era] (Belgrade, 1994), 131, as well as Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting*, 340. For the dedicatory inscription, see G. Tomović, *Morfologija ćirilskih natpisa na Balkanu* [Morphology of Cyrillic Inscriptions in the Balkans] (Belgrade, 1974), 48.

⁴⁷ Regarding the destruction of the church of the Mother of God at Mušutište, see S. Ćurčić, "Destruction of Serbian Cultural Patrimony in Kosovo: A World-Wide Precedent?" *Bulletin of British Byzantine Studies* 26 (2000): 101–6, esp. 103–4.

⁴⁸ Ćurčić, *Gračanica*.

⁴⁹ Ibid., chap. 4, passim, regarding similarities and differences of design of the three buildings. On the architecture of Bogorodica Ljeviška, see S. Nenadović, *Bogorodica Ljeviška. Njen postanak i njeno mesto u arhitekturi Milutinovog vremena* (Belgrade, 1963). For Staro Nagoričino, see B. Todić, *Staro Nagoričino* (Belgrade, 1993), with older literature on the subject.

unmistakable Thessalonian characteristics no longer survives. The church of the Ascension (Vaznesenje), also known as Sv. Spas (Savior), near Kiustendil, Bulgaria (medieval Velbužd; Byzantine Velevousdion; ancient Pautalia), was commissioned by the Serbian king to commemorate his victory over the army of the Bulgarian emperor Michael Shishman in 1330. Popularly known as “Spasovica,” its ruins were still standing until World War II, when they were completely demolished. Recorded on photographs taken at the turn of the twentieth century, the church remains have been architecturally documented and published.⁵⁰ The crucial photograph of the building, as seen from the southwest, originally published by Iordan Ivanov, indicates that its minor domes were of the Thessalonian variety, featuring octagonal drums with corner colonnettes, double skewbacks, and slender windows. In plan, the church featured a compact cruciform naos, preceded by a twin-domed oblong narthex, conceptually related to the *katholikon* of Hilandar monastery, the oldest known example of this scheme (Fig. 47, A).⁵¹

Probable links with Hilandar are notable in another church whose construction occurred during the reign of Stefan Dečanski—the church of St. Demetrius in the patriarchal complex of churches at Peć. Built by the Serbian archbishop Nikodim, in 1321–24, the church was the first of a series of additions to the thirteenth-century church of the Holy Apostles.⁵² Abutting its naos along the north side, the church of St. Demetrius must have given the impression of a monumental funerary *parekklesion*, comparable in concept, if not in details, to such buildings as the roughly contemporary *parekklesion* of the Chora in Constantinople. Possibly built by a mixed crew of builders, the church of St. Demetrius reveals several idiosyncratic features, such as the Gothic window frame in its apse. At the same time, its dome displays a number of pronounced Thessalonian characteristics (Fig. 48). Notable are the triple skewbacks and the slender brick corner colonnettes. Deviating from the Thessalonian formula, this dome displays curious use of stone, in fact, an assortment of several different types of stone blocks, introduced almost randomly into an otherwise predominantly brick structure. Such use of stone blocks is at variance with contemporary Byzantine practice in general. When stone did appear in domes of Thessalonian churches, as in the northeast dome of H. Aikaterine (Fig. 8), it was in the form of regularly spaced courses. The same is true, as we have also seen, of the minor domes of the *katholikon* of Hilandar monastery (Fig. 15). Given the latest thinking regarding the dating of Hilandar *katholikon*, it seems very possible that Nikodim, the hegoumenos of Hilandar from 1311 to 1317, may have been responsible for bringing some of the builders from Hilandar to Serbia, after becoming the new Serbian archbishop in 1317.⁵³ In recent years our insights into the manner of building workshop operations and dissemination of their ideas, methods, and techniques have slowly begun to develop. These suggest that workshop skills acquired by young apprentices on major building sites, supervised by Byzantine master builders,

⁵⁰ S. Nenadović, “Arhitektura Spasovice,” *Zbornik zaštite spomenika kulture* 19 (1968): 33–42. Reconstruction drawings by the author display some deviations from what is actually discernible on photographs.

⁵¹ S. Čurčić, “The Twin-Domed Narthex in Paleologan Architecture,” *ZRV* 13 (1971): 333–44.

⁵² M. Čanak-Medić, *L'architecture de la première moitié du XIII^e siècle, II, Les églises de Rascie* (Belgrade, 1995), 17, 33–34, and 47, gives the most recent account of the history of the building and its architecture, with older bibliography.

⁵³ Archbishop Nikodim (1317–24), the patron of the church of St. Demetrius, was the hegoumenos of Hilandar monastery until his elevation to the throne of the Serbian archbishop (12 May 1317?); cf. Sava, Episkop sumadijski, *Srpski jerarsi od devetog do dvadesetog veka* (Belgrade–Podgorica–Kragujevac, 1996), 362.

became the means of spreading Byzantine architectural style within Serbia.⁵⁴ The church of St. Demetrius at Peć may aid in the process of improving our understanding the means of training new builders and their mobility, about both of which we know so pathetically little.⁵⁵

Serbian royal patronage of Hilandar monastery provides us with three additional insights of relevance in the context of this study. The first is a small church of St. Basil in the so-called Hrusija, or Old Monastery, on the seacoast, near Hilandar.⁵⁶ The church, built by King Stefan Dečanski around 1330, shares several characteristics, including scale, with the church of Spasovica already discussed (Fig. 47, B and A). Recently restored and stripped of an exterior coat of plaster, its dome has revealed characteristics that link it to the domes on the *katholikon* at Hilandar monastery (Fig. 49).⁵⁷

The chapel of the Holy Archangels in the courtyard of Hilandar monastery may also belong to this family of buildings.⁵⁸ Externally plastered and painted, the church has a relatively low dome, whose drum is partially concealed by a later slate tile roof (Fig. 50). Its plan displays similarities with the church of St. Basil, albeit on a slightly smaller scale (Fig. 47, C). Legend ascribes the church to Emperor Dušan, whose visit to Mount Athos and Hilandar monastery during the outbreak of the plague in the winter of 1347–48 may have been the occasion for such a donation. Judging on the basis of our analysis, the architectural character of the building seems to confirm this dating. Finally, the exonarthex of the Hilandar *katholikon* may also have been commissioned by Emperor Dušan.⁵⁹ Its dome repeats the design and building technique of the two small domes over the *katholikon* narthex (Figs. 15, 51).

If several large-scale fortification towers are added to the list of buildings associated with Hilandar to which I have already alluded, we are left with a distinct impression that the monastery and its immediate environs must have been a site of continuous construction over a period of several decades at the outset of the fourteenth century. Its spiritual but also secular links with Constantinople, with Thessalonike, and ultimately with Serbia, made Hilandar one of the most important and influential centers of the period in question. Only further in-depth study of this monastery will reveal the many still undetected clues regarding the processes of transmission of architectural ideas and stylistic variants during the Palaiologan era.

The role of the Hilandar monastery in the transmission of architectural ideas into Ser-

⁵⁴ S. Ćurčić, "Two Examples of Local Building Workshops in Fourteenth-Century Serbia," *Zograf* 7 (1977): 45–51.

⁵⁵ For the latest general discussion of the subject, see R. Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Princeton, N.J., 1999), esp. chap. 2.

⁵⁶ S. Barišić, "The Church of St. Basil on the Sea," in *Hilandar Monastery*, ed. G. Subotić (Belgrade, 1998), 197–204.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, fig. on p. 204. The church may have originally been coated with plaster and painted, as indicated by sections of once preserved original (?) decoration on the dome drum. These details have been removed along with large areas of demonstrably later plaster. This problem is dealt with separately in my article entitled "Nezapaženi doprinosi Hilandara razvoju srpske srednjovekovne arhitekture" [Unobserved contributions of Hilandar to the development of medieval architecture in Serbia], in *Četvrta kazivanja o Svetoj Gori* [The Holy Mountain—Thoughts and Studies 4] (Belgrade) (in press).

⁵⁸ Nenadović, "Arhitektura Spasovice," 131–33.

⁵⁹ S. Ćurčić, "The Exonarthex of Hilandar. The Question of Its Function and Patronage," in *Osam vekova Hilandara. Istorija, duhovni život, književnost, umetnost i arhitektura* [Huit siècles du monastère de Chilandar. Histoire, vie spirituelle, littérature, art et architecture], ed. V. Korać (Belgrade, 2000), 477–87.

bia, especially under the auspices of Archbishop Nikodim, has already been stressed. On this occasion, it may be useful also to refer to the small church of the Transfiguration (Preobraženje) in the village of Budisavci, in the region of Kosovo, ca. 17 km east of Peć. The church, whose extensive restoration under the auspices of Archbishop Makarije in 1568 is documented, was originally built in the fourteenth century, but a record of the circumstances of this construction has not been preserved.⁶⁰ With the recent discovery of the building technique on the dome of the church of St. Basil at Hrusija, it is now possible to propose a link between these two buildings. The lower part of the dome of the Budisavci church has preserved its original medieval appearance (Fig. 52). Its octagonal form, with its corner semi-cylindrical colonnettes and double skewback framing of the four slender windows on the main axes of the building, recalls Thessalonian domes in a most general sense. Its distinctive building technique, comprising alternate banding of several courses of brick with several courses of stone, reveals similarities with the dome of St. Basil at Hrusija. Lacking further evidence at this point, we may simply hypothesize that the church may have been built by the builders brought to Serbia from Mount Athos by Archbishop Nikodim, or by some of their apprentices, shortly after the completion of the church of St. Demetrius at Peć in 1324. The cruciform plan of the church at Budisavci also reveals some conceptual links with the group of churches associated with Hilandar monastery that we have considered in this context (Figs. 53 and 47).

When Stefan Dušan became the king of Serbia in 1331, he continued the policy of active patronage of church construction of his father, and particularly of his grandfather Milutin. Furthermore, like his grandfather, he fostered a climate in which his noblemen eagerly followed the ruler's lead, building their own churches and monasteries. As many as six such churches, relevant to this study, and built in these circumstances during Dušan's reign, have been preserved within the F.Y.R.O.M. The oldest among these is the church of the Presentation of the Mother of God (Vavedenje Bogorodice, also known as Sv. Spas) in the village of Kučevište, near Skopje (Fig. 54). The church was built ca. 1330, apparently by a woman named Marena, together with a certain Radoslav and another woman, Vladislava. Marena appears to have been a noblewoman, and all three individuals may be identified as belonging to a powerful local feudal family.⁶¹ Their church displays a slightly elongated cross-in-square plan of approximately the same size as the church at Mušutište, built a decade and a half earlier (Fig. 37, C and B). Its narthex with an elaborate fresco cycle was added in 1332–37.⁶² The original building, by virtue of its simple plan, its size, and its general architectural character, reveals affinities with the churches at Čučer and Mušutište. Like those two churches, it also displays a "Thessalonian dome," here with double skewbacks, as we saw on Gračanica.

Shortly after Kučevište, in 1332, Vojvoda Hrelja, a high-ranking nobleman in Dušan's state and an owner of vast estates east of the Vardar (Axios) River, commissioned the church of the Holy Archangels in the town of Štip (Byzantine Stypeon).⁶³ The church is based on what appears to have been a standard, slightly elongated cross-in-square plan

⁶⁰ M. Ivanović, "Crkva Preobraženja u Budisavcima," *Starine Kosova i Metohije* 1 (1961): 113–44.

⁶¹ Djordjević, *Zidno slikarstvo*, 131–36.

⁶² Ibid., 135–36; also Z. Rasokolska-Nikolovska, "O ktitorskim portretima u crkvi Svete Bogorodice u Kučevištu," *Zograf* 16 (1985): 41–53.

⁶³ The church has received very little attention largely, it would seem, because its interior is without frescoes. Among the few notable comments are those of Millet, *L'école grecque*, 114–15; and Dj. Bošković, "Beleške

(Fig. 37, D). Merely 1m longer than the church at Kučevište, the church of the Holy Archangels also displays unmistakable affinities with Thessalonike. This is particularly true of its octagonal dome drum featuring all-brick construction, triple skewbacks framing windows, and slender corner colonnettes (Fig. 55). The dome of the Holy Archangels also displays an idiosyncratic characteristic that may link it to a specific monument in Thessalonike. Its eight-sided drum is rotated in such a way that colonnettes, instead of windows, appear on the main building axes. Such an arrangement appears also on the narthex dome and on the no longer extant *parekklesia* domes of H. Panteleimon in Thessalonike (Fig. 20). Like H. Panteleimon, the church of the Holy Archangels once had a lateral chapel on its south side. Recorded on a unique photograph taken by G. Millet, this chapel was topped with another “Thessalonian dome” (Fig. 56). The entire *parekklesion*, and any other lateral elements, such as a narthex that may once have existed, are now gone. As in the case of H. Panteleimon, these were additions not structurally bonded with the building core, though they must have been added shortly after its completion and possibly as part of the original design intentions.

Another member of Dušan’s aristocratic circle, a lady Danica, built a monastic church dedicated to St. Nicholas at Ljuboten, on the slopes of Skopska Crna Gora.⁶⁴ The church, dated to 1337, employs a plan that can best be described as a standard formula, its length measuring 12 m, identical to the churches of Mušutište and Kučevište (Fig. 37, E, A, and C). The dome of Ljuboten, along with substantial portions of its superstructure, was drastically restored in 1928. A photograph taken by G. Millet before this restoration reveals that its dome, too, had all the characteristics of a typical “Thessalonian dome” (Fig. 57).

To the same group also belongs the church of St. Stephen in the monastery of Konče, near Štip, built during the reign of Emperor Dušan (1346–55) by a nobleman (*veliki vojvoda*) Nikola Stanjević.⁶⁵ The church utilizes the same basic, slightly elongated plan, here 13.2 m long (Fig. 37, F). The main distinction, in this case, is the preference for slight elongation of the main piers in plan. The dome, much like that at Ljuboten, despite its heavy-handed recent restoration, preserves the essential characteristics of the Thessalonian formula.

By far the most impressive and best preserved of the churches built by the nobility in Serbia during the fourth and fifth decades of the fourteenth century is the church of Archangel Michael at Lesnovo monastery, commissioned by the Sevastokrator, later Despot Oliver with his wife Marija and their two sons. Initially built between 1341 and 1346, the church was enlarged, apparently as a result of its having become the seat of the bishopric of Zletovo after the council of Skopje in 1347 (Figs. 37, G and 58).⁶⁶ The en-

sa putovanja” [Notes de voyages], *Starinar*, 3d ser. 7 (1937): 98–100. E. Reusche, “Polychromes Sichtmauerwerk byzantinischer und von Byzanz beeinflusster Südosteuropas,” inaugural diss., Universität zu Köln (Cologne, 1971), 160–64, offers useful observations on the masonry technique.

⁶⁴ Ž. Tatić, “Arhitektonski spomenici u Skopskoj Crnoj Gori: 2. Ljuboten” (Fr. summary: “L’église de Ljuboten”), *Glasnik Skopskog naučnog društva* 2.1–2 (1927): 93–108.

⁶⁵ R. M. Grujić, “Arheološke i istoriske beleške iz Makedonije” (Fr. summary: “Notes archéologiques et historiques de Macédoine”), *Starinar*, n.s. 3–4 (1955): 203–16, esp. 205–11 for Konče. On the restoration of the church see L. Šumanov, “Istraživanje i projekt Sv. Stefan, s. Konče” (Ger. summary: “Forschung und Projekt ‘Sv. Stefan’, Dorf Konče”), *Kulturno nasledstvo i čovekoviot životen prostor. Zbornik na trudovi od naučniot kolokvium* (Skopje, 1983): 200–208.

⁶⁶ S. Gabelić, *Manastir Lesnovo. Istorija i slikarstvo* (Belgrade, 1998), offers a detailed discussion of historiography (pp. 15–22) and the history of the monastery (pp. 23–50).

largement consisted of a domed narthex, built between 1347 and 1349. Both parts, the original naos and the added narthex, feature “Thessalonian domes” of the highest quality (Figs. 59, 60). Judging by the presence of Old Church Slavonic as well as Greek inscriptions at Lesnovo, one is reminded not only of Dušan’s imperial tenets, but also of the fact that Greek artisans, in this case most probably from Thessalonike, were employed here on this ambitious project.⁶⁷ The two domes, in addition to their constructional details, display also other specific affinities with Thessalonike. Both domes are rotated so that colonnettes, and not windows, appear aligned with the building’s main axes. This design peculiarity, as we have already seen, was employed in the churches of Olympiotissa at Elasson (Fig. 31) and Holy Archangels at Štip (Fig. 56), as well as in the narthex dome of H. Panteleimon in Thessalonike (Fig. 20), possibly the prototype of the entire group featuring this idiosyncratic detail.

The church of St. Nicholas at Psača monastery, though only partially preserved, illustrates the continuation of the Thessalonian impact into the sixth decade of the fourteenth century.⁶⁸ Built before Emperor Dušan’s death in 1355, the church was commissioned by another of his noblemen by the name of Vlatko. The original church had a four-piered naos, here spatially fused with a single domed narthex (Fig. 37, H). In this case only the narthex dome has been preserved (Fig. 61). Of inferior quality, when compared to the narthex dome of Lesnovo (Fig. 60), Psača may be another example of the work of local apprentices trained by the Thessalonian masters on a major building project. In this case the training may well have occurred at Lesnovo. This hypothesis requires further close study of the two churches in question.

In addition to the churches mentioned, a large number of churches, many of them still preserved, were built in and around Skopje, the capital of Dušan’s state. This phenomenon has been noted, but is deserving of more extensive attention.⁶⁹ Given our objectives, I will touch on only some of the main issues that concern us here. Among the churches built in the area of Skopje one of the most impressive must have been the church of the Mother of God (Bogorodica) at Matejić monastery, apparently begun by Dušan himself, but finished by his wife Jelena and son Uroš after his death in 1355 (Fig. 62).⁷⁰ The church, situated on a prominent plateau overlooking the plain near Kumanovo, still survives notwithstanding the numerous misfortunes it suffered throughout history, the latest one in the summer of 2001.⁷¹ The grand building displays a standard cross-in-square plan, ex-

⁶⁷ S. Ćurčić, “The Architecture of Lesnovo in the Light of Political Realities in Mid-Fourteenth-Century Macedonia,” *BSCAbstr* 14 (1988): 22.

⁶⁸ For the latest account of the history of the church and an up-to-date bibliography, see Djordjević, *Zidno slikarstvo*, 172–75; also K. Tomovski, “Konzervacija crkve manastira Psače” [la conservation de l’église du monastère Psača], *Zbornik zaštite spomenika kulture* 14 (1963): 39–44.

⁶⁹ For an introduction to the problem see S. Ćurčić, “Architecture in the Byzantine Sphere of Influence around the Middle of the Fourteenth Century,” in *Dečani et l’art byzantin au milieu du XIV^e siècle*, ed. V. J. Djurić (Belgrade, 1989), 55–68.

⁷⁰ The scholarly literature on Matejić is sparse. The most extensive account of its architecture still remains A. Deroko, “Matejča,” *Starinar*, n.s. 8–9 (1933–34): 84–89; for a general historical account see Petković, *Pregled*, 184–88.

⁷¹ This major monument of Serbian medieval architecture was seriously damaged by fire during the physical occupation of the building by Albanian insurgents in the summer of 2001; J. Nikolić Novaković, “Matejče Monastery—Presentation of Damages,” *Urgent Regional Workshop: Cultural Heritage at Risk in the Event of Armed Conflict—Macedonia Case* (sic) 20–24 February 2002 (Ohrid). The proceedings of this international workshop, focused on the recent damage and destruction of several monuments in the Balkans, are currently in press.

panded eastward by a deep sanctuary flanked by two domed chapels. Correspondingly, on its west side the church has a narthex whose extreme bays are also crowned by a pair of domes. The construction of the five domes is revealing. The western pair of small domes clearly displays Thessalonian affinities (Fig. 63). The main dome, on the other hand, with its characteristic technique of alternating bands of brick and stone construction, departs from the Thessalonian standards (Fig. 64). Inasmuch as the church at Matejić displays other characteristics with no links to Thessalonike, its architecture must be seen as evidence of a new architectural synthesis occurring in the region of Skopje during the period of its prosperity as the capital of Dušan's short-lived Serbo-Greek Empire. The role of Thessalonike in that context was limited to the presence of certain Thessalonian features, by this time already fully assimilated into the local building practice during the 1330s and 40s.

The goal of this study has been to shed light on the role of Thessalonike in the development of late medieval ecclesiastical architecture in the Balkans. This role has long been postulated, but its analysis has never gone beyond vague generalizations. In setting out to accomplish this goal it was necessary first to underscore the distinction between what, on occasion, has been referred to as the "Macedonian School" of architecture and architecture that can be associated specifically with Thessalonike itself. The large number of relatively well preserved monuments, both in Thessalonike and in the region of late Byzantine and Serbian Macedonia, and beyond, provides a basis for an in-depth study, an outline of which has been presented here. My insistence on the use of the term "Thessalonian dome" was driven by concern to provide a suitable tool for detecting certain building traits and their spread. The term, as I believe has been demonstrated, has a degree of specificity that is based on the sheer quantity of data at our disposal.

My preliminary conclusions—and they are only preliminary—can be sketched out as follows. Thessalonike's role as the center of major architectural activity in the first decades of the fourteenth century was a by-product of the reconstitution of the Byzantine Empire and the fact that Byzantine Macedonia at that time became a region hotly contested between Byzantium and Serbia. In favorable political and economic circumstances and owing to a large volume of construction, a local manner of building evolved in Thessalonike during the last decades of the thirteenth century. This building manner came about as a blending of experience brought in by builders from Epiros and the Empire of Nicaea. Soon after 1300 Thessalonian builders were in demand in the surrounding region, and beyond, reaching into the territories of Serbia, and to a far more limited extent, Bulgaria. The erstwhile archenemy of the empire, subsequently the emperor's son-in-law, Serbian king Milutin, became the chief lure for Thessalonian builders with his royal commissions that began shortly after his marriage with the Byzantine princess had been arranged in 1299. King Milutin's interest in Byzantine builders as well as painters was but a part of his program of cultural "Byzantinization" of Serbia.⁷² Serbian noblemen followed the royal example by hiring either Byzantine builders or native builders trained by foreigners on major building projects, such as the church of Gračanica monastery. As the fortunes of Serbia continued to rise in the following decades, those of Thessalonike went into decline. A civil war that broke out in the 1340s, and the territorial expansion of Serbia under Stefan

⁷² Ćurčić, *Gračanica*, chap. 1.

Dušan, brought about a major shift in patterns of building patronage. It would appear that from ca. 1330 to ca. 1355 Thessalonian and other Byzantine builders flocked to Serbia, placing themselves in the service of the Serbian rulers and their nobility. During this time, the capital of Serbia, Skopje, became the new center of architectural gravity, superseding Thessalonike in that role. It would appear that, following Dušan's death in 1355, a brief revival of church building occurred in Thessalonike until this, too, was brought to an end with a prolonged period of isolation, siege, and the first Ottoman conquest of the city in 1387.

The region of Macedonia, as we have seen, became an extremely fertile area of architectural production from ca. 1280 to ca. 1370. The beginnings of the architectural activity in the region witnessed an influx of builders from the Despotate of Epiros, as well as from the Empire of Nicaea, as these entities lost their political significance. Once its prestige was reestablished, by around 1300, Thessalonike began to exert influence of its own, on a regional scale. The role of Thessalonike in the development of fourteenth-century ecclesiastical architecture in the Balkans, however, was restricted both geographically and chronologically. Thessalonike, even at the height of its architectural productivity, was only one of the sources of architectural influence in the region of Macedonia (Fig. 65). During the first decades of the fourteenth century its impact was paralleled by that of Epiros, emanating at the time from another newly risen prosperous center, Ohrid. By the 1340s both Thessalonike and Ohrid were eclipsed by the third major center of regional architectural production—Skopje, the capital of Stefan Dušan's short-lived Serbo-Greek Empire. Throughout this period of lively developments, the monastery of Hilandar played a major role, attracting as it did the best builders from other centers, such as Constantinople, and in turn channeling them elsewhere, where the demand for building was great. Thus Hilandar, along with Thessalonike and Ohrid, must be perceived as one of the main sources of Byzantine architectural influence in Serbia during the first half of the fourteenth century.

While a general outline of the role of Thessalonike may now be clearer, the main work still lies ahead. The several dozen churches preserved, or known to have existed in Greece, F.Y.R.O.M., Serbia, and Bulgaria—most of them essentially understudied or not studied at all—provide an opportunity but also an obligation to penetrate into the issues more deeply. The lack of archival material does not preclude learning about builders, their methods, workshops they belonged to, movements of different workshops, and so on. All of that can be gleaned in good measure from careful examination of the buildings themselves. Once again, here perhaps more clearly than anywhere, one can insist on the documentary value of the physical evidence at hand. How to use this evidence is the challenge we must find ways to respond to.

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